

This electronic thesis or dissertation has been downloaded from the King's Research Portal at <https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/>



'Der Mensch ist nicht der Herr des Seienden.'
Existentialism and Postwar German-language Writing

Marwood, Laura Ann

Awarding institution:
King's College London

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author and no quotation from it or information derived from it may be published without proper acknowledgement.

END USER LICENCE AGREEMENT



Unless another licence is stated on the immediately following page this work is licensed

under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International

licence. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

You are free to copy, distribute and transmit the work

Under the following conditions:

- Attribution: You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).
- Non Commercial: You may not use this work for commercial purposes.
- No Derivative Works - You may not alter, transform, or build upon this work.

Any of these conditions can be waived if you receive permission from the author. Your fair dealings and other rights are in no way affected by the above.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact librarypure@kcl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Doctoral Thesis

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at

King's College London
&
Universität Stuttgart

‘Der Mensch ist nicht der Herr des Seienden.’ Existentialism and Postwar German-language Writing

Author: Laura Marwood

Supervisors: Professor Robert Weninger (KCL) &
Professor Sandra Richter (Stuttgart)

Submitted June 2016

ABSTRACT

This doctoral thesis seeks to investigate the relationship between existentialism, a philosophy of life that is as much literary as it is philosophical in effect, and German-language literature in the aftermath of the Second World War. The focus will be on three German-language writers whose novels have given implicit formulation to a range of existential concerns. These include the notions of the self, freedom, authenticity, responsibility, angst, *Grenzsituation* and suffering, and constitute what I refer to as an unwritten existentialist manifesto. The writers selected for examination in this study are Max Frisch (1911-1991) with his 1954 novel *Stiller*, Alfred Andersch (1914-1980) with his 1952 autobiographical report *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*, and Heinrich Böll (1917-1985) with his posthumously published *Der Engel schwieg* (1949/1992). Whilst these writers do not engage in *explicit* philosophical or theological existentialist reflection as such, their novels can be seen to provide *implicit* literary formulation to the aforementioned range of existentialist themes. These three writers and their works highlight the extent to which existentialist concerns penetrated post-1945 German-language literature even where the writers themselves did not openly identify with existentialism as either a literary or philosophical phenomenon. As will be shown, their novels deal with the principal questions that stand at the core of existentialist philosophy, and indeed that stand for the human individual, at this point in Western intellectual history. These analyses will consider the idea of existentialism *as* literature, defining an image of existentialism as it developed in not only philosophical but also literary terms, thus establishing how existentialism can and should be approached as *both* a philosophical and literary phenomenon. In this regard, the works of literature by Frisch, Andersch and Böll can be seen as a crucial means of expression for and dissemination of existentialist thought. A study of these literary texts will also uncover the continuing relevance of this philosophical movement which grapples in such fundamental ways with the concrete aporias and threshold situations of human existence then as today. What renders existentialism as a method of inquiry and reflection so pertinent is less its preoccupation with existence in general than its contention that thinking existentially about *human* existence leads us to pose questions that extend beyond the conceptual repertoire of classical philosophy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	2
Table of Contents	3
Acknowledgements	4
Introduction.....	5
- The Topicality of Existentialism in Postwar Germany	10
Chapter One: Genesis of Existentialism	22
- Towards a Definition of Existentialism	25
– Key Themes of Existentialism	46
• <i>Das Ich</i>	46
• Freedom	49
• God and Nihilism	60
• <i>Grenzsituation</i>	67
• Angst	70
Chapter Two: Max Frisch	78
Chapter Three: Alfred Andersch	129
Chapter Four: Heinrich Böll	193
Concluding Remarks	262
Bibliography	270

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Not everyone is as fortunate to have Ph.D. supervisors like Robert Weninger and Sandra Richter. My first supervisor Robert Weninger has been an exceptional supervisor in every possible way: offering invaluable guidance and feedback, supporting and believing in me, reading countless drafts, and challenging me to understand my research in new ways. I am equally indebted to my second supervisor Sandra Richter for her insight, precision, patience and support. I hope that one day I will be half the educator and mentor to someone that Robert Weninger and Sandra Richter have been to me.

I would not have been able to embark on this project without the financial support of The Department of German at King's College London and their generous doctoral scholarship which I held from 2012-2015. This award enabled me to pursue my research in London and, for the final two years of my Ph.D., in the department for *Neuere Deutsche Literatur* in Stuttgart.

The King's College London German Department is a constructive, critical and inspirational environment in which to study German. I would like to thank Erica Carter, Benedict Schofield, Áine McMurtry and Catherine Smale, as well as my fellow research students Richard McClelland and Alice Guilluy for creating such a productive and enjoyable work environment, and for sharing their expertise, friendship and humour.

On a personal level, there are many friends and family members who have been central to my life while writing this thesis, and whom I would like to thank for their support. These include Benno Hoffmann, Sara Glojnarić, Sophie Harrold, Blinne Trainor, Helena Meskanen, Inger Torill Narvesen, Daniel Lynch and Stefanie Lurz. But I would most like to thank my close family. I have been lucky to grow up with two endlessly understanding and inspirational parents and a kind-hearted and loyal sister. Mum, Dad, Sarah, thank you for your encouragement, patience, understanding and, of course, your love. I dedicate this thesis to you.

INTRODUCTION

‘The novelist is neither historian nor prophet: he is an explorer of existence’
– Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*

The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between the philosophical movement of existentialism, a philosophy of life that is as much literary as it is philosophical in effect, and German-language literature in the aftermath of the Second World War. This movement, whose roots are traceable in the writings of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), Wilhelm Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973) and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), resurfaced in the mid-1940s with Jean-Paul Sartre’s 1938 novel *L’Nausée*, Albert Camus’s 1942 novel *L’Étranger* and, perhaps most crucially, Sartre’s 1946 essay *L’existentialisme est un humanisme* as a kind of Bohemian ferment in the Parisian arrondissement of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Existentialism has since remained a subject of intense curiosity and fascination. Yet what explains this fascination? Is it attributable to a desire merely to understand the full historical ramifications of existentialism as a movement in both philosophy and literature? Does it spring from the continuing attraction of the central existential themes (some of which we will encounter later)? Or does it perhaps derive from a fundamental misunderstanding and even oversimplification of this *en vogue* social phenomenon that re-emerged in Europe around the end of the Second World War? The very question ‘can you give me a one-sentence definition of existentialism?’¹ serves testament to the phenomenal popularisation but also misrepresentation of an otherwise vast and complex philosophical and literary tradition. The belief that existentialism can be explained in a single sentence, or that one can merely know

¹ Maurice Freedman, ‘Introduction’, in *The Worlds of Existentialism: A Critical Reader*, ed. Maurice Freedman (New York: Random House 1964), pp. 3-14, p. 3.

about it without understanding it from within, has rendered the existentialist movement something of an ‘intellectual fad and robbed it of its proper seriousness’, affirms Maurice Freedmann in his introduction to the anthology *The World of Existentialism*.² Contrary to such facile reactions, the gravity of existentialist thought does not, as William Barrett contends in his *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy*, ‘merely arise out of the despair from a world from which God has departed’.³ Rather, it is a complex intellectual movement which envelops and fuses disparate philosophies in a reaction against both the purely rational and the merely irrational in favour of a dynamic and tangible involvement and engagement based on action and choice, commitment and authenticity, as well as the concrete situation of the existential subject which is taken as the main departure point of existentialist thought. In essence, existentialism is not merely an intellectual fancy or a mere heterogeneous throwing-together of various constituents of theistic and atheistic thought any more than it is a distinct, clearly defined and, in many respects, literary philosophy.

This study shall thus begin with the contention that the movement of existentialism can be approached as *both* a philosophical and literary phenomenon, which has been communicated through many diverse forms in recent centuries. Some of the most notable and influential existentialist publications include Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous philosophical volumes *Either/Or* (1843), Heidegger’s metaphysical treatise *Sein und Zeit* (1927), and Jasper’s *Existenzphilosophie* (1938). Equally significant, however, are the literary existentialist productions of Sartre, including the existentialist plays *Les Mouches* (1943) and *Huis Clos* (1944), Simone de Beauvoir’s *L’Invitée* (1943), as well as Camus’s profoundly disturbing existentialist novels *La Peste* (1947) and *La Chute* (1956). In addition to philosophical treatises and novels, the contemporaneity and centrality of the question of human existence in the mid-twentieth century has also been widely explored in studies and essays, the most notable of which include Hannah Arendt’s essays ‘Was ist

² Ibid.

³ William Barrett, *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy* (New York: Anchor Books, 1962), p. 17.

Existenzphilosophie?' (1946),⁴ 'French Existentialism' (1946),⁵ 'Concern with Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought' (1954),⁶ Herbert Marcuse's essay 'Existentialism: Remarks on Jean-Paul Sartre's *L'Être et le Néant*' (1948), as well as Otto Friedrich Bollnow's momentous study *Existenzphilosophie* (1949).

Rather than simply provide an exploration of existentialism in literature, or a survey of those literary works that figure within existentialism, this study will seek to examine the idea of existentialism *as* literature, outlining an image of existentialism as it develops in literary rather than purely philosophical terms. In this regard, this study stands in opposition to David E. Cooper's contention that existentialism can be regarded as a 'relatively systematic philosophy', and that an excessive reliance on existentialist literature has resulted in grave misunderstandings about the movement's fundamental essence.⁷ On the contrary, existentialist literature offers a crucial means of interaction with existentialist thought. Whilst one can approach existentialism through the philosophical volumes and essays that make it up, such as those by Kierkegaard or Jaspers which will form a necessary contextual backdrop in this study, one can also approach it through the literary works which constitute a parallel yet less systematic and theoretical mode of articulation and communication.

Supposing therefore that the writer is, as Milan Kundera asserts in the opening citation, an explorer of existence, should we therefore view all writers and novelists as existentialists? The inevitable shortcoming of this contention is that it threatens to conflate existentialist literature with literature by and of itself which is always in some way about our existence. Yet existentialism as an intellectual tradition is radically more circumscriptive than Kundera's claim would allow, on one account naming a historically specific phenomenon that is principally concentrated on the literary and philosophical work of Sartre, Camus and de Beauvoir from the late 1930s through to the 1950s. Yet while most critics agree that this boundary setting is too restrictive, it is no easy task to set boundaries better suited to the subject. In his

⁴ Hannah Arendt, 'Was ist Existenz-Philosophie?', in *Hannah Arendt: Sechs Essays* (Heidelberg: Schneider, 1948), pp. 48-80.

⁵ Hannah Arendt, 'French Existentialism' in *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken, 1994), pp. 188-194.

⁶ Hannah Arendt, 'Concern with Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought', in *ibid.*, pp. 428-447.

⁷ David E. Cooper, *Existentialism: A Reconstruction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 8.

essay 'Existentialism as Literature', Jeff Malpas for instance laments how existentialism has at times been so nebulously construed as to acknowledge writers as diverse as Emily Dickinson, T. S. Eliot, William Faulkner, Graham Greene, Henrik Ibsen, Hermann Melville, Iris Murdoch, and Harold Pinter – to name but a few – to be included within the existentialist canon.⁸ Indeed, one might question whether there is any eminent modern literary figure who has not at some point or other been studied within an existentialist context.

Yet if existentialism is to be in any way a meaningful literary category, and if we are to uphold a sense of existentialism as a distinctive development within modern literature as well as philosophy, then it seems that we are called upon to establish an explanation of literary existentialism in accordance with existentialist thinking. It is precisely this issue that will form the focus of the first chapter of this study, in which I will outline a grouping of what I consider to be typical existentialist themes, a sort of unwritten existentialist manifesto if one will, that includes the themes of *das Ich*, human freedom, authenticity, responsibility, angst, the 'other', *Grenzsituation* and suffering. These themes will subsequently form the methodological backdrop for my later discussions of literary texts.

Within this context of existentialism as a broader philosophical and literary movement, the focus of this study shall be the prevalence of existentialist thinking in specifically German-language literature in the two decades after 1945. Yet in order to enter into my discussion I wish to begin by addressing the topicality of the existentialist movement in post-war European society and, in particular, of the archetypal existential themes of the self, freedom, authenticity, the 'other' and angst in contemporary culture. 'Historisch gesehen', Odo Marquard admits in his 'Vorlesungen zur Existenzphilosophie', first delivered at the Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen in the summer semester of 1974, 'ist [...] die Existenzphilosophie nicht gegenwärtigste Gegenwart'.⁹ Existentialism, he continues,

⁸ Jeff Malpas, 'Existentialism as Literature', in *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism*, ed. Steven Crowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 291-321, p. 292.

⁹ Odo Marquard, *Vorlesungen zur Existenzphilosophie: Was bedeutet das alles?*, ed. Franz Josef Wetz (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2013), p. 8.

ist (blickt man auf Kierkegaard) im 19. Jahrhundert entstanden, sie ist (blickt man auf Heidegger) in den 20er Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts zu ihrer entscheidendsten Formulierung gekommen, sie ist (blickt man auf den frühen Sartre) unmittelbar nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg eine zentrale Philosophie gewesen. Und wenn es sich so verhält, dann muss man doch wohl die Frage stellen: Stimmt die Behauptung ‘Die Existenzphilosophie ist aktuell!’ denn wirklich?¹⁰

The significance of Marquard’s leading question is that it serves to make us reflect on the on-going contemporaneity and ‘timelessness’ of existentialist themes. What makes existentialism as an approach of inquiry and reflection particularly *au courant* is less its concern with existence in general than its claim that thinking about *human* existence, because it is something uniquely temporal, continually raises new questions, questions indeed not all found in and confronted by the conceptual repertoire of ancient thought or classical philosophy. Regardless of era, time, space or place, ‘der Einzelne’, the individual, remains a key focus of human curiosity¹¹ and can be understood neither as a substance with fixed properties, nor as a subject interacting unchangeably with a world of objects. It is precisely the primacy of individual existence, lived experience and human freedom, all of which change from generation to generation, that lends and will continue to lend existentialism its particular weight and contemporaneity, particularly in a world in which, according to Barrett, ‘modern man seems ever further from understanding himself than when he first began to question his own identity’.¹²

Even in the early twenty-first century, the above assertions by Marquard and Barrett still resonate strongly. Existentialist themes continue to permeate society, upholding the idea that no matter how many ways the individual tries to hide, there is essentially no evading the question of what it means to be human. Contemporary cinema, media coverage, the impact of celebrity culture and cyber-psychology are each carried by the premise that each existing individual is forced to struggle for identity and meaning solely in and through his or her own terms. The perpetual

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 12.

¹² Barrett, *ibid.*, p. 23.

alienation from and isolation within society that come with individual existence seem to be exaggerated by our mass communication rather than remedied by it.¹³ Although modern society is quick to assuage the anxiety and unease triggered by existential awareness, it remains evident that the external world of things, ideas and people remains for many human beings inherently absurd and incongruous.

THE TOPICALITY OF EXISTENTIALISM IN POSTWAR GERMANY

This study thus begins in May 1945, a period in time which marks not just the fall of Nazi Germany but also the advent of the rebirth of existentialism. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the publication of Sartre's *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*¹⁴ can be considered as the most decisive turning point in the history of existentialist philosophy; it reverberated far beyond the borders of France. The overarching topical significance of existentialism for German-language writers and intellectuals in the immediate postwar years resided in those ideological vacuums which, both preceding and following the Second World War, had grown into feelings of emptiness, powerlessness, despair and fear, painfully experienced by an 'ohnmächtige, geschlagene, verlorene Generation' who, in the words of Heinz Ludwig Arnold, was suffering the condition of being 'zurückgeworfen' on their 'nackte, leidende, zufällige Existenz'.¹⁵

For the likes of writers such as Alfred Andersch and Hans-Werner Richter in particular, the purported *tabula rasa* of postwar Germany seemed the ideal chance to restore the German spirit in one solitary artistic act. In August 1946 Andersch and Richter launched *Der Ruf*, intended as an independent journal for the *junge Generation*, which became the chief forum for young authors and poets calling for a

¹³ Wesley Barnes, *The Philosophy and Literature of Existentialism* (New York: Barren's Educational Series, 1968), p. vi.

¹⁴ Sartre's text was first published in Paris in 1946. The first English translation was completed by Bernard Frechtman as *Existentialism* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947) and the following year by Philip Mairet as *Existentialism and Humanism* (London: Methuen, 1948). Neither title hints at Sartre's question about the relation between existentialism and humanism. The texts and translations were nevertheless widely received in Europe following their publication.

¹⁵ Heinz Ludwig Arnold, *Die drei Sprünge der westdeutschen Literatur: eine Erinnerung* (Wallstein, Göttingen, 1993), pp. 28-29.

so-called *Stunde Null*.¹⁶ Taking his lead from Jean-Paul Sartre's preface to the play *Les Mouches*, Andersch recognised in existentialism an opportunity in the postwar years to break free from the shackles of Germany's recent past and embrace a future devoted to the freedom of the individual. In his programmatic essay 'Deutsche Literatur in der Entscheidung', unveiled at the second meeting of the *Gruppe 47* in Herrlingen in 1947, Andersch contended that because of the brittleness of previous cultural and literary values, a renewal of German spiritual life was imperative:

Aus dem Zwang einer völlig neuartigen Situation heraus, steht die junge Generation vor einer tabula rasa, vor der Notwendigkeit in einem originalen Schöpfungsakt eine Erneuerung des deutschen geistigen Lebens zu vollbringen.¹⁷

A unique and creative act, Andersch reasoned, was essential for the regeneration of post-war German life, as it would assist in the eradication of an aged and morally bankrupt culture. A further appeal of French existentialism was its calling for a new understanding of the role of the writer and of literature. Both must now fully 'engage' and commit themselves in the struggle for freedom. The ruthless honesty and lucidity of Sartre's *Les Mouches* and *Huis Clos* as well as Camus's *Caligula*, all of which were performed repeatedly on German stages after the war, resonated strongly with disillusioned German writers, in that it offered an alternative to logical positivism and empiricism and instead sought to address the concrete realities of existence in a war-ravaged nation. In an age of European collapse, existentialism as both a philosophical and literary movement offered a response to man's increasing despair and alienation.

¹⁶ The terms *Stunde Null*, *Nullpunkt* and *zero hour* remain a point of literary controversy; whilst one can find declarations by members of a literary postwar generation lamenting the bankruptcy of the older generation and indeed of the entire German cultural tradition, - 'Unser Hass, der Hass der jungen Generation, besitzt die Rechtfertigung der unbedingten Notwendigkeit' -, one fails to find specific German references to a *Nullpunkt* or a *Stunde Null* in 1945. For quote cf. Alfred Andersch, 'Notwendige Aussage zum Nürnberger Prozess', *Der Ruf* 1, August 1946; reprinted in *Der Ruf: Eine deutsche Nachkriegszeitsschrift*, ed. Hans Schwab-Felisch (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1962), pp. 26-29, p. 26.

¹⁷ Alfred Andersch, *Deutsche Literatur in der Entscheidung: Ein Beitrag zur Analyse der literarischen Situation* (Karlsruhe: Volk und Zeit, 1948), p. 24.

Aside from the literary and essayistic output of the *Gruppe 47*, as well as works by other German-language writers such as Max Frisch and Heinrich Böll which will be explored later, specific publications from this period that likewise serve testament to the contemporaneity and centrality of the question of human existence in postwar Germany are Hannah Arendt's essays 'Was ist Existenzphilosophie?' (1946), 'French Existentialism' (1946), and 'Concern with Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought' (1954),¹⁸ Herbert Marcuse's 'Existentialism: Remarks on Jean-Paul Sartre's *L'Être et le Néant*' (1948), and Otto Friedrich Bollnow's *Existenzphilosophie* (1949). Hannah Arendt's essays are particularly significant in how they capture the prevalence of existentialist thought in the midst of the traumatic upheavals of twentieth-century European history. The works of the German-born Jewish political theorist, who fled from Europe during the Holocaust and became an American citizen, deal largely with the themes of power, politics, democracy, authority and totalitarianism. Having studied under Heidegger at the University of Marburg in 1924, and later under Jaspers at the University of Heidelberg, Arendt also developed a strong interest in how existentialism sought to sever ties with traditional philosophy and transform philosophising into a public, revolutionary activity. In her essay 'French Existentialism', Arendt alludes to how existentialism took philosophy out of academic institutions and onto the streets, shattering the distinction between thought and action in the process; she writes:

A lecture on philosophy provokes a riot, with hundreds crowding in and thousands turned away. Books on philosophical problems preaching no cheap creed and offering no panacea but, on the contrary, so difficult as to require actual thinking sell like detective stories [...]. This is what is happening, from all reports, in Paris. If the Resistance has not achieved the European revolution, it seems to have brought about, at least in France, a genuine rebellion of the intellectuals.¹⁹

It is precisely this air of intellectual insurrection to which Arendt alludes that captures the prevalence and immediacy of existentialist thought also in postwar

¹⁸ Hannah Arendt, 'Concern with Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought', in *ibid.*, pp. 428-47.

¹⁹ Arendt, 'French Existentialism', *ibid.*, p. 188.

German society. In the same essay she goes on to argue that the two main features of existentialism are firstly the rejection of the identification of man with the social role he or she enacts, that is to say, the insistence to disconnect the fundamentally human and individual character from the surface persona assigned by society; and secondly existentialism's 'angry refusal to accept the world as it is as the natural, predestined milieu of man'.²⁰

In her 1946 booklet 'Was ist Existenzphilosophie?' Arendt expands her perspective to look at the historical trajectory of existentialism, focusing especially on Kant's, Kierkegaard's, Jaspers' and Heidegger's conceptions of existence. As the title indicates, 'Was ist Existenzphilosophie?' is a predominantly philosophical account of the currents in post-Kantian thought leading up to the developments of mid-twentieth-century existentialism. Arendt creatively appropriates the existentialist notions of the self, death, angst, responsibility and *Grenzsituation*, concepts that in her view constitute the existential fundamentals that underlie the human condition, many of which will also form the basis of what I am calling the German thinkers' implied existentialist manifesto. In the essay Arendt takes care to differentiate her insight of the world from the 'solipsistic' ontology of her teacher Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* by presenting his existential visions and exploring the key concepts of *Sorge*, *Besinnung*, *Angst* and *Vereinzelung*: Heidegger's notion of *Dasein* 'ist also dadurch charakterisiert,' she writes, 'dass es nicht einfach ist, sondern dass es ihm in seinem Sein um sein Sein selbst geht'.²¹ From this juncture Arendt probes the Heideggerian notion of *Sorge*, a phenomenon in which the concepts of guilt, conscience and being-unto-death are fundamentally anchored. According to Heidegger, these are existential conundrums which remind *Dasein* of the fundamentals of its condition, namely, its temporality of finitude. *Dasein* becomes thrown (*geworfen*) into a world of facticity, of human circumstances and contexts that precede it and in which it is submerged. Only in the process of pulling oneself back out of this routine of everydayness to a condition of resolute coming-to-one's-senses (*Besinnung*) is *Dasein* able to reach a state of authenticity. This should not, however, detract from another key existential condition, namely man's

²⁰ Ibid., p. 189-90.

²¹ Hannah Arendt, 'Was ist Existenzphilosophie?', p. 69.

perpetual anticipation of his own death. ‘Der wesentlichste Charakter dieses Selbst’, Arendt explains,

ist seine absolute Selbstischkeit, seine radikale Abtrennung von allen, die seinesgleichen sind. Dies zu erzielen war der Vorlauf zum Tode als Existential eingeführt; denn in ihm realisiert der Mensch das absolute principium individuationis.²²

Whilst the modern self actively cultivates, according to Heideggerian philosophy, a forgetfulness of death by immersing itself in the company and community of others, the acknowledgement of death, Arendt elucidates, serves to remind the individual that all that truly matters is oneself: ‘Mit der Erfahrung des Todes als der Nichtigkeit schlechthin’, she explicates, the individual has the opportunity, ‘[s]ich dem Selbstsein ausschließlich zu widmen und die Mitwelt, in die [er] verstrickt [ist], im Modus der grundsätzlichen Schuld ein für allemal los zu werden.’²³

In the same essay Arendt goes on to expound also upon other key existential tropes in her discussion of Karl Jaspers’s *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, in particular the concepts of human freedom and responsibility. Jaspers’s philosophy has its underpinning in a subjective-experiential transformation of Kantian philosophy, which reconstructs Kantian transcendentalism as a doctrine of particular experience and spontaneous freedom. It also seeks to underscore the constitutive importance of lived existence for authentic knowledge. Jaspers achieved his widest influence not through his philosophy, but through his writings on governmental conditions in Germany, and after the collapse of National Socialism he emerged as an authoritative spokesperson for moral-democratic education and reorientation in the Federal Republic of Germany.

In the essay Arendt, who had studied under Jaspers in the 1920s, agrees with her former mentor that existence is not a form of Being but a form of human freedom whereby ‘der Mensch als Möglichkeit seiner Spontaneität sich gegen sein bloßes Resultatsein wendet’.²⁴ Like Kant, Jaspers conceived of freedom as autonomy:

²² Ibid., p. 72.

²³ Ibid., p. 72.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 75.

human beings are free when they become the master of their deeds and thus become fully responsible for them. Jaspers's concept of freedom entails that the individual transforms that which he *is* into his own freedom, so that his free decisions essentially become his own fault. In this way the systematic and tranquil objective world exposes an overwhelming array of choices and possibilities in which human existence strives to fully actualise its freedom. Against this background, therefore, Jaspers claims that the self-disclosure of the innumerable possibilities of human existence depends on the capacity of the individual human life to open itself to the experience of *das Unbedingte*. Guided by the unconditioned, existence is placed in what Jaspers refers to as boundary situations (*Grenzsituationen*). Jasperian boundary situations, Arendt explains, are moments in which human existence simultaneously reflects, confronts and supersedes both its cognitive and practical boundaries. Individual consciousness is confronted with the limits of its experiential habits and is forced to reflect upon, and thus also to enact, its most extreme existential possibilities.

A discussion of the existential concept of *Grenzsituation* is also presented by Otto Friedrich Bollnow in his 1949 systematic exploration of existentialism, *Existenzphilosophie*. Bollnow, who held a post in philosophy, philosophical anthropology and ethics at the University of Tübingen and dedicated his academic career to the study of phenomenology, existentialist philosophy and Wilhelm Dilthey, opens his study with the assertion that 'Jedes Leben findet sich schon immer in eine bestimmte Lage versetzt, in bestimmte "Lebensumstände"'.²⁵ In such situations man is confronted with discrepancies and contradictions, and he becomes conscious that reason is failing him. Tangled in antinomies, Bollnow continues, the individual is thrown back upon himself and is driven to a threshold of his existence where he may experience boundary awareness. In this regard, existentialism forcefully emphasises

dass die Situation nichts ist, in das der Mensch nur gelegentlich und nur äußerlich gerät, sondern dass das menschliche Dasein wesensmäßig ein Sein

²⁵ Otto Friedrich Bollnow, *Existenzphilosophie*, 1st edition (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1949), p. 53.

in einer Situation ist und dass der Mensch der Verhaftetheit mit seiner Situation niemals entfliehen kann.²⁶

Man will live out his existence besieged by situations not of his choosing and which defy his wishes and needs; citing the title of one of Sartre's novels he writes: 'Sie sind wie der "Pfahl im Fleisch", durch den dem Menschen die Unvollkommenheit seines Daseins eindringlich vor Augen geführt wird'.²⁷ Yet ultimately it is only in boundary situations that the searing finitude of human *Dasein* can be fully experienced, Bollnow concludes, 'denn sie bezeichnen die harte Schranke, die jede Auffassung der Welt und des menschlichen Lebens unmöglich macht'.²⁸

Next to the existentialist concepts of *Dasein*, *Geworfenheit* and *die Unheimlichkeit der Welt*, the notion of angst commands a central position in Bollnow's work. The themes of anxiety, doubt, melancholy and boredom had never been more topical in the history of human thought than in the mid-twentieth century, and it is only in the context of this intellectual situation, Bollnow contends, that one can understand the renewed rise of existentialism: 'Die Stimmungslagen der Angst und der Verzweiflung, der Schwermut und auch der Langweile', he emphasises, 'geben der Existenzphilosophie ihr eigentümliches Gesicht'.²⁹ Angst characterises a state in which the relationship between man and his surroundings becomes bizarre and unfathomable; we read: 'Die ihn sonst so warm und vertraut umgebende und mit ihren verschiedenen Lebensbezügen tragende Welt ist plötzlich wie ferngerückt'.³⁰ All discernable meaning in life is overawed by doubt and questionability. The human individual, German or otherwise, has nothing more to hold onto, 'er greift ins Leere und findet sich in völliger schrecklicher Einsamkeit und Verlassenheit'.³¹ Expounding on Kierkegaardian doctrine, Bollnow proceeds in his work to explain how it is only when the individual consigns and commits himself fully to his despair and anxiety that he becomes able to 'leap' towards existence; he observes: 'So ist

²⁶ Ibid., p. 54.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 57.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 58.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 59.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 61.

³¹ Ibid.

die Verzweiflung die Krise, durch die der Weg zur eigentlichen Existenz führt'.³²
We will return to this in the following chapter.

The third publication I wish to draw attention to for its crucial role in the dispersion of existentialist thinking in the post-war years in Germany is Herbert Marcuse's essay 'Existentialism: Remarks on Jean-Paul Sartre's *L'Être et le Néant*'. During the 1940s, the German-American philosopher, sociologist and political theorist engaged in empirical research that allowed him to develop a substantive theory of the present age. Having studied with Heidegger in the 1920s, Marcuse was no doubt captivated by the wave of French existentialism. Following his mentorship under Heidegger,³³ Marcuse's only published article from the late 1940s is his Marxist critique of Sartrean existentialism in which he denounces existentialist individualism and metaphysics, insisting:

In so far as existentialism is a philosophical doctrine, it remains an idealistic doctrine: it hypostatizes specific historical conditions of human existence into ontological and metaphysical characteristics. Existentialism thus becomes part of the very ideology which it attacks and its radicalism is illusory.³⁴

In the spirit of critical theory,³⁵ Marcuse contends that it is social theory and not philosophy which conceptualises the tangible historical conditions of human existence. Hegel, Marcuse claims, 'comes close to the structure of human existence' since 'he interprets it in terms of the historical universe'.³⁶ That said, Hegel

³² Ibid., p. 67.

³³ In 1947 Marcus denounced Heidegger's allegiance to the Nazi Party as an act of philosophical and intellectual self-betrayal. Referring to Heidegger's claim to have disassociated himself from the Hitler regime in 1934, Marcuse insisted that there still remained in 1947 a widespread public perception of his continued commitment; cf. Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen II-VI (Schwarze Hefte 1931-1938)*; *Überlegungen VII-IX (Schwarze Hefte 1938-1939)*; *Überlegungen VII-XV (Schwarze Hefte 1939-1941)*, (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2014).

³⁴ Herbert Marcuse, 'Existentialism: Remarks on Jean-Paul Sartre's *L'Être et le néant*', in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 8.3, March 1948, pp. 309-336, p. 311.

³⁵ Critical Theory has both a circumscriptive and a broad meaning in philosophy and in the history of the social sciences. In the narrow sense it refers to several generations of German philosophers and social theorists in the Western European Marxist tradition known as the Frankfurt School, which included, in addition to Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer (1895-1973), Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969), Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), Friedrich Pollock (1894-1970), Leo Löwenthal (1900-1993) and Erich Fromm (1900-1980).

³⁶ Marcuse, Ibid., p. 335.

approaches it from the perspective of Spirit which places his theory within a framework of ‘philosophical abstraction’.³⁷ Kierkegaard by contrast turns to theology to grapple with the concreteness of human existence and suffering, while Marx implements political economy and social theory, both of which underscore ‘the essential inadequacy of philosophy in the face of the concrete human existence’.³⁸ Heidegger and Sartre, however, Marcuse proposes, attempt to develop an existential mode of thinking which seeks to grasp the situation of the historically concrete individual. Marcuse concludes nonetheless that

no philosophy can possibly comprehend the prevailing concreteness. Heidegger’s existential ontology remains intentionally ‘transcendental’: his category of *Dasein* is neutral toward all concretization. [...] In contrast, Sartre attempts such concretization with the methods and terms of philosophy – and the concrete existence remains ‘outside’ the philosophical conception, as a mere example or illustration. His political radicalism lies outside his philosophy, extraneous to its essence and content. Concreteness and radicalism characterize the style of his work rather than its content.

In each of these publications pro and contra existentialism themes of angst, freedom, *Grenzsituation*, authenticity and the self thus command a central place. Yet there is another existentialist trope, one that is less often deliberated, yet shall serve as an additional thematic cornerstone in our upcoming discussions; it is the theistic existential notion of suffering, which is central to Kierkegaard’s philosophy. Perhaps the one thinker to explore this metaphysical notion in any considerable depth in the mid-twentieth century was existentialist theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965). Having emigrated from Germany to Germany at age 47 in 1933, Tillich was one of the few American intellectuals to strongly influence the progression of continental philosophy during the twentieth century. He was a prominent moral and philosophical figure throughout much of the 1940s and 50s who sought to reconcile modern philosophical movements with the Christian faith. Tillich was profoundly engaged in existentialist ideas, but his philosophical deliberations can be more

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

closely affiliated to those of Heidegger than Kierkegaard. Tillich developed, for instance, Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*, but unlike Heidegger he contended that God is 'Being-itself,' which is to say our capability to overcome anxiety and uncertainty in order to make the necessary choices to commit ourselves to a particular way of living.

In his deliberations on the theme of being, Tillich also goes on to analyse the essence of suffering as follows:

Leid fühlen wir, wenn uns unsere innerste Erfüllung versagt ist, weil wir etwas entbehren, was zu uns gehört und unsere Erfüllung erst ermöglicht. Vielleicht haben wir unsere nächsten Angehörigen und Freunde verloren [...]. Durch all dies erfahren wir Leid in mannigfacher Form: das Leid der Trauer, das Leid der Einsamkeit, das Leid der Schwermut, das Leid der Selbstanklage.³⁹

Tillich contends that suffering is essentially meaningful, but becomes meaningless in existence. The main causes of meaningless suffering are aloneness, which also has two perspectives or modalities in which solitude is positive in how it is a precondition for entering into a community with others, whilst estrangement is aloneness and therefore unacceptable. Tillich also acknowledges that whilst suffering can be, 'wie es bei Paulus heißt, "die Traurigkeit der Welt"' [...], die zum Tode letzter Verzweiflung führt', it can also constitute a 'göttliche Traurigkeit [...], die zur Seligkeit führt'.⁴⁰ Faced with objective uncertainty, with the inconclusiveness of objective analysis and rational debate, man experiences suffering and anguish, which is compounded by anticipation of one's own death and one's feeling of insignificance in the face of the eternal order of things. Yet what both Tillich and Kierkegaard advocate in their writings is the need for decisiveness, a 'leap'; in other words, a commitment to a relationship with God that defies objective analysis. Of course, one may choose not to trust in religious faith, and to counter suffering through rational understanding and knowledge. One might

³⁹ Paul Tillich, 'Das Neue Sein als Erfüllung', in *Religiöse Reden* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1983), pp. 307-320, p. 316.

⁴⁰ Tillich, *ibid.*

alternatively embrace the logic which governs Camus's recognition of man's absurd condition, in which a leap is also proposed as a solution to existential despair, yet into an existence without God. Ultimately, Kierkegaard contends, there are only two possibilities presented to man in such a scenario: 'One is to suffer; the other is to become a professor of the fact that another suffered'.⁴¹

The impact of existentialism on German social and political theory is merely a symptom of the interest shown by society at large in existentialism's themes and tenets. As this study hopes to show in the following chapters, the movement of existentialism reverberated palpably also within German literary circles, and the existentialist themes of *das Ich*, authenticity, *Grenzsituation*, angst, freedom and suffering readily found expression in essays, works of literature and on the stage. Literature constitutes a key to providing an understanding of the unique existence of human beings. Philosophy had traditionally taken a fundamentally instrumental view of man, namely, assuming man had been created for a specific purpose and it is the task of philosophy to decipher that purpose. Modern existentialism, and in its wake modern literature, or more specifically, the postwar German novel, hesitates to pose this question; rather, for German authors of this period their novels constitute an opportunity through which they can pose the question *What is man?* and explore it more fully by contemplating the life-stories of their protagonists specifically in existentialist terms.

Taking my cue from Arendt that existentialism is an ideal springboard to tackle the very question *What is man?*, the remainder of this study will be dedicated to exploring three German-language writers whose novels have given implicit formulation to an array of existential issues, especially the aforementioned notions of the self, angst, death, responsibility, *Grenzsituation*, suffering and authenticity. These writers are Max Frisch (1911-1991) with his 1954 novel *Stiller*, Alfred Andersch (1914-1980) with his 1952 autobiographical report *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*, and Heinrich Böll (1917-1985) with his posthumously published *Der Engel schwieg* (1949/1992). Of course, these three writers and their works in no way pick

⁴¹ Søren Kierkegaard, 'Journal Entry for 1854', in *The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. and trans. Alexander Dru (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 528.

up on *all* the facets of existentialism, nor is it the intention of this study to label them as fully-fledged existentialist writers. These three writers and their works, however, do seem to me to show up the depth to which existentialist concerns infiltrated, or seeped into, post-1945 German-language literature even where the writers themselves did not explicitly identify with existentialism as either a literary or philosophical movement. Even where they clearly seek to maintain their distance from their existentialist predecessors, for me their novels raise the principal questions that stand at the heart of existentialist philosophy, and indeed that stand for man himself, at this point in Western intellectual history.

In light of existentialism's undiminished relevance, as Odo Marquard would have it, it strikes me as a worthwhile endeavour not just to (re)trace the impact of existentialism on German-language writers at this crucial juncture of German and European history, but also, in doing so, to revisit these texts in order to weigh how topical their messages might still be. My study will begin in the following chapter, however, not with those writers themselves but by surveying the key themes as they emerge from the history of existentialist thought; it is these key themes that we will later pursue in the chapters devoted to *Stiller*, *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* and *Der Engel schwieg*. These three texts will bring to light the centrality and prevalence of existentialist thought in German-language writing in the aftermath of the Second World War.

CHAPTER ONE

Wenn man demnach sagt: 'Sein' ist der allgemeinste Begriff, so kann das nicht heißen, er ist der klarste und aller weiterer Erörterung unbedürftig. Der Begriff des 'Seins' ist vielmehr der Dunkelste.

- Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*

GENESIS OF EXISTENTIALISM

This introductory chapter seeks to provide a history of the process of systemising and canonising existentialism as a philosophical movement of thought. As such, it will reconstruct a common dialogue about the *conditio humana* in the form of a series of reception histories. This thesis treats existentialism as a philosophy that takes the existence of man as its starting point. Since the beginning of human history, people have mused over the origins of their existence. They have questioned the nature of the universe, what brings them into association with their fellow human beings and nature, who they *really* are, and a multitude of other matters that unsettle the quietude of humankind. This is what we broadly and generally understand as existentialism. It is a life-view of which the individual constructs his own system of ethics through the choices he or she makes, and in which the individual bears sole responsibility for his or her actions. One cannot ignore, however, the fundamental difficulties in the task of defining existentialism as a philosophical movement, for it provides neither a consistent or systematic philosophy nor approach to thought.¹ One might hope that an overview of the history of existentialism would offer a comprehensive explanation of this philosophical concept, yet existentialism is an *enfant terrible*, forever rejecting a concise dictionary definition or formula. As Hazel E. Barnes rightly affirms, 'There is no common creed to which each writer is pledged. Admittedly there are areas of

¹ *Situating Existentialism: Key Texts in Context*, ed. Jonathan Judaken and Robert Bernasconi (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 10.

sharp disagreement'.² Otto Friedrich Bollnow similarly remarks on the difficulty in defining who precisely is an existentialist in his work *Existenzphilosophie* – 'Versucht man die Existenzphilosophie mit den Namen bestimmter typischer Vertreter zu bezeichnen, so stößt man zunächst auf eine gewisse Schwierigkeit'.³ This lack of intellectual consistency should not lead to an outright rejection of the existentialist label, however. In this sense, it shall be among the key aims of this thesis to locate an identifiable set of philosophical themes and tendencies that will serve to defend our positioning the writers, whose works I have selected for analysis, within the existentialist tradition.

In locating a hitherto unwritten existentialist manifesto, this thesis will draw on three philosophical schools. Firstly, that of Kantian transcendental idealism and post-Kantian idealism. It is perhaps one of the gravest oversights, or perhaps even misunderstandings in modern philosophy to assume an abrupt break between the two major schools of continental philosophy, German idealism and phenomenology or existentialism. Many prominent existentialist thinkers, most notably Søren Kierkegaard and Gabriel Marcel, habitually branded idealism as a philosophy of desertion from the human perspective. Instead they viewed it as a philosophy of the absolute that failed to comprehend the concrete richness of human life in the bleak abstractions of thought. For these existentialists, idealism is a form of ideology, estranged from its roots in lived experiences. Other scholars tend to approach the two schools with a view to juxtapose them, underlining their purported radical differences, thus reinforcing the idea that existentialism is a disdainful rejection of idealism in all its forms.⁴ This thesis, however, will attempt to argue otherwise. Post-1945 existentialism cannot be understood without acknowledging its roots in the cultural milieu and general philosophical atmosphere of the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century. This study contends how the fundamental assertions in the writings of Kant and Fichte, and other prominent idealists are not as remote from mid-twentieth-century philosophy as they appear. Indeed, many existentialists' own

² Hazel E. Barnes, *The Literature of Possibility: A Study in Humanistic Existentialism* (London: Tavistock, 1961), p. 4.

³ Otto Friedrich Bollnow, *Existenzphilosophie*, p. 11.

⁴ Jon Stewart, *Idealism and Existentialism: Hegel and Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century European Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 1.

analyses of concrete existence, including those of Sartre, Heidegger,⁵ and even sceptics of idealism like Kierkegaard and Marcel, draw on the theoretical resources of German idealism, often to a striking degree. As will be shown in more extensive detail below, idealist philosophers were profoundly concerned with human existence, and one can discern several strands of thematic overlap that are central to both philosophical schools, which are as follows. Firstly, the perennial problem of the nature of the self, '*das Ich*,' in the form of the human ego. Secondly, the true conception of human freedom and responsibility. And thirdly, the notions of theism and atheism in existentialist thinking. Within this context, this investigation will concurrently explore the concept of nihilism, the belief that there is no inherent value to be found in the world, or beyond it, and that there is no intrinsic purpose to human existence.

The second philosopher that demonstrates clear existentialist tendencies is Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard's concept of angst alludes to a state of extreme despair and uncertainty in people caused by their state of freedom to choose. It is a complex phenomenon that Kierkegaard believes is operative at every level and in every sphere of human existence. As described in *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), Kierkegaard understands angst as an indefinable emotion, which has nothingness as its object. It is a feeling of dizziness that unnerves us, an alien power that grasps us. It seizes a person as they face a particular possibility, that is, 'as one's psychical sensitivity projects a vague image or adumbration which acquires the quality of being "possible," of being capable of (or even demanding) enactment of one's finitude'.⁶ Angst will thus serve as a fourth existentialist theme to be analysed as part of this thesis.

The third and final school of philosophical thinking to be included in the virtual existentialist manifesto is that of early twentieth-century philosopher Karl Jaspers,

⁵ However one interprets Heidegger's rejection of existentialism (c.f. Martin Heidegger, 'Brief über den Humanismus,' in *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit; mit einem Brief über den Humanismus* (Bern: Francke, 1947), pp. 72-75, it is evident that there are a great many existentialist themes in his writing. For instance, his insistence that authentic existence is a crucial aspect of ontology, and similarly his claim that anticipatory resoluteness or authentic Being-towards-death is a necessary prerequisite for experiencing Being in a philosophically primordial way.

⁶ Arnold B. Come, *Kierkegaard as Humanist: Discovering My Self*, (Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), p. 50.

specifically his notion of *Grenzsituation*. In his 1919 work *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, Jaspers explained how *Grenzsituationen* can arise when the individual confronts an existential, and not just an intellectual, antimony – opposing values that cannot be evaded yet also cannot be reconciled. The individual is catapulted into a state of mental and existential suspense, unable to fathom the nature of that which he or she is called on to evaluate, yet equally unable to escape it. This philosophical concept can thus be understood as transformative. It shakes mankind out of a complacent and dreary perspective and drives him or her towards an awareness of transcendence and, correlatively, to his or her own freedom.

The identification of a set of existentialist themes will effectively help us to underpin the essentially existentialist nature of many eighteenth-, nineteenth and early twentieth-century philosophies, reaffirming the notion that post-1945 existentialism is by no means a stand-alone movement, but rather has a rich myriad of philosophical influences. As will soon become apparent in the upcoming overview, the history of existentialism is long and extensive. The prospect of establishing a chronological review of existentialism would be a complex, if not impossible task in this thesis, for it is not simply a case of linking up one existentialist thinker to the next. With this in mind, the first section of this introduction will offer a broad and general overview of where existentialist notions have featured in the history of philosophy, as well as in other academic disciplines, including art, psychology and education. It will also consider the transatlantic diffusion of existentialist ideas, and its position within international literatures. In the second part, it will explore in greater depth a selection of the aforementioned philosophers and expound upon the five overarching existentialist themes and concepts that feature in their writing.

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism entered as a global cultural phenomenon at the *Club Maintenant* in Paris on October 29 1945, where Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) first delivered his momentous lecture ‘L'Existentialisme est un humanisme’ (‘Existentialism is a Humanism’), which he subsequently published in 1946. It is significant to mark Sartre’s direct use of the hitherto contentious term, for one of the particular

peculiarities of existentialism is that few philosophers labelled themselves as such. Sartre initially rejected the term after it was first applied to him by Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973) whilst in discussion with a group of Dominicans at Le Cerf. Sartre defended his position as a philosopher of existence, but insisted that ‘existentialism’ carried no meaning.⁷ Nevertheless, his weighty 1945 lecture, poignantly delivered in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, indicates Sartre’s adoption of and engagement with the existentialist label. It is perhaps Sartre’s *belated* acceptance of the term that fellow philosopher and novelist Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) was alluding to when she spoke of a set of young bohemian denizens of Saint-Germain-des-Prés who really did call themselves existentialists, wear a ‘new existentialist uniform of black sweaters, black shirts and black pants,’ frequent the same cafés and bars, and assume an air of ennui.⁸ Despite Sartre’s reconciliation with the term by 1945, fellow writer and philosopher Albert Camus (1913-1960) always insisted that he had never been an existentialist, and that he didn’t really know what it was.⁹ He preferred to classify himself as a courageous humanist, and saw his own undertakings as part of the *philosophie de l’absurde*, which he felt represented a more accurate explanation of his early viewpoint. Furthermore, he was resentful of his work being assimilated to that of his French counterpart, Sartre, despite their close associations. As he recounted in an interview with Jeanine Delpech in 1945:

No, I am not an existentialist. [...] Sartre and I published all our books, without exception, before meeting each other. When we met, it was to verify our differences. Sartre is an existentialist, and the only book of ideas I have published, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, was directed against philosophers called existentialists.¹⁰

⁷ For the complete version of this account, see: Simone de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1964), pp. 45-46.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁹ By 1960 ‘existentialism’ (much like ‘structuralism’ a few years later) had become a general-purpose catchphrase, roughly approximating to ‘bohemian’ in earlier decades. According to Tony Judt, ‘the unemployed art students who came to hear the Beatles on the Reeperbahn in Hamburg all called themselves ‘Exis.’ Cf. Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London: Random House, 2007), p. 400.

¹⁰ Albert Camus, ‘No, I am not an Existentialist...,’ in *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, trans. E. Kennedy, ed. Philip Thody (New York: Knopf, 1968), pp. 345-348, p. 345.

German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) also vehemently rejected the existentialist label. This was first articulated in his 1947 work *Brief über den Humanismus*, which was partly intended as a response to Sartre's *Existentialism is a Humanism*. Decidedly disassociating himself from Sartre's *isms*, Heidegger affirmed that every form of humanism involves a metaphysics, an understanding of beings as a whole that does not concern itself with the truth of Being. Like Camus, he renounced any similarity between his philosophy and that of Sartre, who he appeared to hold in low esteem. William H. Werkmeister confirmed Heidegger's position in this regard when he visited the philosopher in 1937; '[...] knowing that Jean-Paul Sartre had been his student, I asked Heidegger about his relationship to existentialism. His reply was an emphatic "My God, that I have never intended"''.¹¹ Whilst Heidegger's overt denunciation of Sartreanism remains indisputable, several points must be recalled in order to contextualize his position. Firstly, Heidegger's 1947 repudiation was made during the height of the French existentialist movement, 'and was thus based on a narrow identification of existentialism with Sartre's philosophy of the time,' as Stephan Michelman argues.¹² Furthermore, the two philosophers radically differed in their political standpoints, Sartre being a leftist activist and Heidegger a former defendant of National Socialist ideology during the Nazi era.¹³ Furthermore, Heidegger did not wish to be labelled as a 'philosopher of nothingness' or as an 'advocate of meaninglessness,' a view which may derive from his erroneous combining of the terms 'existentialism' and 'nihilism.' In this way, Heidegger may have come to interpret existentialism in a largely and solely destructive sense.

With this in mind, to define existentialism as a primarily European philosophical and literary movement that reached its peak in the mid-twentieth century would be a relatively fair assessment. Yet despite the movement's rise to prominence in the early to mid 1940s, and the then widespread perception of

¹¹ William H. Werkmeister, *Martin Heidegger on the Way*, ed. Richard T. Hull (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), p. xxii.

¹² Stephan Michelman, *Historical Dictionary of Existentialism* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2008), p. 176.

¹³ Heidegger's motivation for joining the Nazi Party was his belief that National Socialism could provide a renewal of German culture. He was certain that this would lead to the salvation of Western Europe from the effects of nihilism and mass technological civilisation. A key text to understand Heidegger's position is his 1953 text *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1987).

existentialism as a novel and unprecedented undertaking, it is crucial to consider existentialism's long and extensive tradition in the history of Western philosophy. As David Breazeale contends, philosophy can be understood as a 'cumulative affair',¹⁴ and existentialist scholars commonly identify a range of historical antecedents, thus supporting Breazeale's hypothesis. Formerly an unnamed view of human existence, existentialist ideas were first articulated in ancient Greece, and a major exponent of this hypothesis was the French philosopher Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950), who proclaimed how the air of post-war existential *ennui* made famous by the likes of Sartre, de Beauvoir and Camus was in fact part of a vast *arbre existentialiste* of philosophical influences extending back to Socrates (469-399 BC).¹⁵

The classical Greek Athenian philosopher is commonly credited as one of the great founders of Western philosophy. Besides Socrates' major contribution to Western thought, namely his dialectic method of inquiry, known commonly as the Socratic method, he can also be regarded as a proto-existentialist philosopher. This derives from his philosophic preoccupation with the 'caring of the self,' or *epimeleia heautou*. According to Socrates, the self was, above all, the individual's own concern and responsibility. The Greek philosopher maintained that *epimeleia heautou* was not a question of abstract theoretical truths and blind conformity to social norms and predetermined standards of behaviour, but rather an attempt to examine one's life. His position demonstrated a need for introspection and self-tending to ensure the soundness of man's soul.¹⁶ In twentieth-century thinking, French philosopher, social theorist and literary critic Michel Foucault (1926-1984) demonstrated a particular fascination with the proto-existentialist ethics of ancient Greece, and alluded to the potential of *epimeleia heautou*¹⁷ in the secularised, post-modern world:

¹⁴ Daniel Breazeale, 'How to make an Existentialist? In search of a shortcut from Fichte to Sartre', in *Fichte and the Phenomenological Tradition*, ed. Violetta L. Maria Waibel, J. Daniel Breazeale & Tom Rockmore (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), pp. 277-312, p. 277.

¹⁵ Named in Mounier's *arbre existentialiste* are, among others, Socrates, the Stoics, Saints Augustine and Bernard, and Kierkegaard; cf. Emmanuel Mounier, *Introduction aux existentialismes* (Paris: Editions de Noël, 1947).

¹⁶ Socrates explicates the concept of *epimeleia heautou* in Plato's *Apology*; cf. Plato, *Apology*; *In Five Dialogues*, 2nd ed, trans. G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2002).

¹⁷ Foucault translates *epimeleia heautou* as *le souci de soi*. This is normally translated into English as 'the care of the self,' although alternative renderings are also possible: *de* can be translated as 'of' or

Why do we care for ourselves only through the care for truth? I think that we are touching on a question which is very fundamental and which is, I would say, the question of the Western world. What caused Western culture to begin to turn around this obligation of truth, which has taken on a variety of different forms?¹⁸

What Foucault found striking was how morality in ancient Greece was not an arrangement of rules or codes of conduct, but an ethos. It was not related to religion or religious preoccupations, neither was it connected to legal, social or institutional systems. Its domain was the relationship one had towards the self, namely the aesthetics of existence. Foucault remarks on how the expression *epimeleia heautou* carried a particular significance in Greek: 'It does not mean simply being interested in oneself, nor does it mean having a certain tendency to self-attachment or self-fascination [...] it describes a sort of work, an activity; it implies attention, knowledge, technique'.¹⁹ Foucault goes on to note the distinctly existentialist nature of *epimeleia heautou*, and ancient Greek society's disinclination to see ethics as a religious, legal or institutional matter enabled Foucault to note parallels with twentieth-century Western society:

I wonder if our problem is not, in a way, similar to this one, since most of us no longer believe that ethics is founded in religion, nor do we want a legal system to intervene in our moral, personal, private life. Recent liberation movements suffer from the fact that they cannot find any principle on which to base the elaboration of a new ethics. They need an ethics, but they cannot find any other ethics than an ethics founded on so-called scientific knowledge.²⁰

'for,' *soi* can be rendered as 'self' or 'oneself,' and, most crucially, *souci* can be reformulated as either 'care' or 'concern' – cf. Mark G. E. Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault* (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 99-100.

¹⁸ Michel Foucault, 'The Ethic of Care for the Self as Practice of Freedom: An Interview with Michel Foucault,' in *The Final Foucault*, trans. J. D. Gauthier & S. J., ed. James William Bernauer & David M. Rasmussen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988) pp. 1-20, p. 15.

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress,' in *The Foucault Reader*, trans. J. Harari, ed. Paul Rabinow (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), pp. 340-372, pp. 359-60.

²⁰ Foucault, 'On the Genealogy,' p. 343.

Foucault argues that modern civilisation has unwillingly inherited a tradition of Christian morality with its values of self-renunciation and self-sacrifice, as well as the secular tradition that sees in external laws the basis for morality. Against these traditions, *epimeleia heautou* appears as immorality, egoism or a means of escape from rules and responsibility towards others. The French theorist advocates however that this should be understood as stemming from an entirely different conception of ethics – ethics as practise, creative activity, the permanent training of the self by oneself. Whilst Foucault never directly advocated that the ethics of ancient Greece be fully incorporated in contemporary Western civilisation,²¹ he remained steadfast in the view that modern Western society could learn something from it:

My idea is that it's not necessary to relate ethical problems to scientific knowledge. Among the cultural inventions of mankind there is a treasury of devices, techniques, ideas, procedures, and so on, that cannot exactly be reactivated but at least constitute, or help to constitute, a certain point of view which can be useful as a tool for analysing what is going on now – and to change it.²²

Socrates' philosophies, among which we can include his considerations of justice and man's pursuit of the virtue *areté* (or, in its fundamental sense, 'excellence' or 'goodness'), proved to be a source of controversy in Athenian society and saw him brought to trial in 399 BC. He was condemned to death for impiety and corruption of the youth. Yet what is particularly significant about these series of events is that despite the then polemic nature of Socrates' theories, his philosophical concept triggered an existential interest amongst Stoic (300 BC) and Epicurean (circa. 307 BC) philosophers of the Hellenistic period, who similarly directed their attentions towards questions of ethics, morality and human existence. Within Stoic philosophy, for instance, one can clearly identify attempts to build on and further Socratic existential attitudes; specifically, its interest in a total existential transformation of

²¹ Foucault condemned the ancient Greek ethics of pleasure, which he regarded as abhorrent. He referred to how it was linked to the ideas of a virile society, to dissymmetry, exclusion of the other, and a fixation with penetration, for example – cf. Foucault, 'On the Genealogy,' p. 346.

²² Ibid., pp. 349-350.

humankind, its preoccupation with the active relationship between cosmic determinism (*constantia*) and the freedom of man, authenticity, and, as became a subject of controversy among later generations of existentialist thinkers, conformity to the dictates of a Natural Law.²³

As already alluded to, another major philosophical epoch to have concerned itself with the problematics of human existence was the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, specifically in the form of Kantian transcendental idealism and post-Kantian idealism. This philosophical era began in the 1750s and lasted until the 1840s, and its most reputable representatives include next to Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) himself, Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854), and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). Often referred to in Germany as the age of ‘Classical German Philosophy,’ this description alludes to the level of distinguished achievement rather than serving to exemplify a specific philosophy or school of thought. It thus evades questions on how philosophers of this period match up with the divide in German literature between classicism and romanticism, and how a distinction can be made between the ‘critical’ or ‘transcendental’ idealism of Kant on the one hand, and the so-called ‘absolute’ idealism that culminated in the works of his successors on the other.²⁴

In order to fully comprehend the background for the existentialists’ thoughts on ethics, it is necessary to dedicate some attention to Kant’s theory of morality. Kant departs from classical moral theory by largely rebuffing the notion of a human being with a fixed essence that has a determinate content. To be sure, he conceives of humans as essentially rational, but he limits this conception to the notion of a rational will that requires self-reflection and self-consistency. In this way, Kant is preparing the ground for philosophers like Sartre who categorically deny any *a priori* human essence that could serve as a basis for a moral theory. Kant similarly breaks with medieval moral thought in his rejection of heteronomy. For human

²³ A detailed description of the Stoic system can be found in John Sellars, *Stoicism* (Berkeley, C.A.: University of California Press, 2006).

²⁴ Cf. Manfred Frank, ‘*Unendliche Annäherung*’: *Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997); and Frederick Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism: The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), and ‘Introduction,’ in *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

freedom to be truly meaningful, only the individual moral will itself can form the basis of the moral law. Kant rejects the notion that God or any external sources provide the grounds for moral commands; his philosophy instead centres on the will of the individual. This position thus prepares the way for later existentialists who insist on a form of voluntarism of the individual and deny that a given situation can ever fully determine an individual's actions.

Building on the theoretical and ethical writings of Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte's proto-existentialist orientation also deserves attention here. Contemplating Fichte's views on the task of philosophy, Daniel Breazeale explores the theoretical quest that animates the Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*, that is, 'the quest for a coherent and certain philosophical system able to furnish us with a fully adequate, transcendental account of the full range of everyday experience [...].' He observes, however, that this 'is not conceived of by Fichte as an end in itself.' Rather, Fichte's philosophical project represents a response to a greater, practical demand – 'a demand not for theoretical or even for practical certainty, but rather for *personal unity* or *wholeness*. We seek systematic unity in the realm of theory [philosophy] not primarily for its own sake, but rather, as a means for coming to terms with and if possible mitigating the painful, existential division within ourselves'.²⁵ Fichte is credited with developing the first theory that treats self-consciousness as its subject. The conclusions he drew from his philosophical investigations had momentous historical consequences. Principal among these deductions was that there is no immediate, undifferentiated structure of self-reference in the human mind, thereby effectively rejecting the view that self-reference accompanies single perceptions (as in Aristotelian philosophy, and later in the writings of Brentano and Husserl). In its place, Fichte concentrates on the mental self-reference that makes up the *I* and on the *I*'s self-identification. Fichte developed this idea in his post-1800 versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, where he affirmed that self-reference is neither the only, nor even the primary structure of the mind. It is rather an indication of more basic processes that underlie the mind, but in a way that these processes necessarily *constitute* the mind's self-reference. From this Fichte derived the dynamic monism that propelled his

²⁵ Daniel Breazeale, 'Philosophy and the Divided-Self: On the Existential and Scientific Task of the Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*', in *Realität und Gewissheit*, vol. 6, ed. Helmut Girndt & Wolfgang H. Schrader (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), pp. 117-148, p. 119.

systematic analysis of all mental structures, which, in turn, led to the theories of the absolute self. These have since been elaborated on by Heidegger and Sartre and will be dealt with in more detail in the upcoming section ‘Key Themes of Existentialism.’

Hegel’s philosophy was also a significant milestone in the development of existentialism, first as an object of criticism and subsequently, in the twentieth century, as a source of inspiration. Hegel’s particular brand of idealism was an attempt to demonstrate that the ultimate nature of everything that exists – human subjects, beliefs, and institutions, along with non-human nature and the entire material universe – is ‘rational.’ To say that the universe is rational is to say not only that it is governed by intelligible laws, but also that it is guided by an intrinsic purpose. The fundamental intelligibility and purpose, what Hegel called *die Idee*, remains dormant at the level of non-human nature. In human beings, however, *die Idee* becomes conscious and active. Hegel’s ‘absolute’ idealism defined itself in contrast to Kantian idealism, where human reason has intrinsic limits which philosophy is required to set forth and justify. Hegel rejected Kant’s thesis that reason is constrained to operate within the limits of space and time and that reality beyond the spatial-temporal realm must remain an unknowable ‘thing-in-itself.’ Jettisoning Kant’s distinction between appearance and the thing-in-itself, Hegel boldly proclaimed that human reason knows no limits, and that everything that exists must eventually receive the imprimatur of human understanding. This process according to which reality is progressively comprehended, gradually but following a necessary logic throughout human history, is called ‘dialectic.’ The dialectic of human history is at the same time a dialectic of reason, or alternatively of ‘consciousness,’ as the same logic operates both in the objective unfolding of events and in our subjective apprehension of them. Significantly, the dialectic is a collective and not simply an individual accomplishment; it is fuelled by the distinctive manner of understanding that typifies whole cultures and eras, and thus undergirds individuals’ thoughts and actions. To this collective manner of understanding Hegel gave the name *Geist*, as indicated in the title of his most famous work, the 1807 *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Hegel’s dialectic is ultimately governed by the logic of *Aufhebung*, where each subsequent form of spirit or consciousness negates the claim of the preceding form at the same time that it

preserves their truth at a higher level. Thus, for example, while the early modern and Renaissance discovery of scientific laws negated the medieval notion of divine providence (God's inscrutable plan) that sees natural events as an expression of God's will, at the same time it preserved the idea that God is active in the world in the assumption that the laws of nature are created by God to be amenable to human understanding.

Moving closer to a modern version of existentialist thought, Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813-1855) sought in his philosophy to define himself as a 'thinker of the self.' This can be understood as an attempt to deal with his existence or, more precisely, to understand the meaning of his life. Kierkegaard was a Copenhagen born philosopher, theologian, poet, social critic, and religious author, who wrote texts primarily on organised religion, Christendom, morality, ethics, and the philosophy of religion. He was profoundly interested in the fundamentals affecting the life of an individual; it is for this reason that he is often referred to as the first existentialist philosopher, if not the 'Father of Existentialism.' The Danish philosopher was an intensely religious thinker, and his views on ethics are tightly bound up with his views on Christianity. Whilst there is no single work which can be regarded as the definitive statement of Kierkegaard's ethical position, *Either/Or* (1843), *Fear and Trembling* (1843), and *Works of Love* (1847) all contain extended discussions of his ethical thinking. For Kierkegaard, the realm of objectivity is a realm of necessity and logic, whilst the realm of subjectivity is governed by a different set of laws. Regardless of how much objective knowledge an individual has or how thorough a logician one is, mankind will always be given a moral choice where discursive knowledge and logic carry no weight or relevance and can provide no normative assistance. Kierkegaard maintains that if morality were simply a question of working out a particular equation according to a utility calculus, then genuine choice would be eradicated and humans would not be free. This kind of logical calculus in effect produces a plan for action independent of the individual since it must be considered a universal, objective procedure which, in principle, can be deciphered by any given moral subject. The real choice, which is perniciously hidden by theories of rationality, occurs much earlier, namely when the individual chooses to allow his or her actions to be governed by these objective procedures, or equations of a utility calculus. Thus, when the individual avails him- or herself of

such methods, a decision has already taken place, and one has tacitly forfeited one's freedom in order to escape into the illusory security of the realm of rational foundations. For Kierkegaard, any theory which purports to ground human morality in objective rational standards is simply preposterous. An additional category inherent in Kierkegaard's existentialist ethical thought is that of 'the religious.' This is perhaps best illustrated by the famous analysis of the Abraham and Isaac story that the Dane sets forth in *Fear and Trembling*. God orders Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, an order which, looked at from an ethical point of view, would seem objectionable. But, says Kierkegaard, the religious 'suspends' the ethical in the sense that normal human ethical comprehension must cede to divine command. But once again when answering the call of the religious, and when answering the call of the ethical, one does not have recourse to objective reasons, justifications or principles. The individual simply decides and acts. For Kierkegaard, true religion and ethical life is experienced with these emotions of fear and trembling, and never ultimately comes to a stable place of rational certitude or equanimity. These notions will be further explored in the upcoming discussion of existential angst. At the time of Kierkegaard's death in 1855, this momentous philosopher was generally unknown outside his native Denmark. Whilst never read by Nietzsche or Dostoyevsky, Kierkegaard's works did come to be a decisive influence on later existentialists, including as Heidegger, Sartre and Camus.

No survey of pre- and proto-existentialist thought can be complete without referring to Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), whose philosophy shaped much of the thinking of the later tradition of aesthetic existentialism. Notably, Nietzsche was the first to try and provide a positive solution to the problems posed for ethics and morality by the absence of God or a transcendent force, placing him in direct contrast to Kierkegaard. His attack on Christian morality, epitomised in the destructive claim that 'Gott ist tot',²⁶ is in many regards original and unique within the pre-existentialist tradition. Indeed, the controversial remark became a vehicle through which Nietzsche affirmed how the traditional belief in a transcendent basis for moral

²⁶ This widely quoted statement can be found in sections 108, 125 and 343 of Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Die fröhliche Wissenschaft,' in *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988). It is also cited in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (Frankfurt a/M: Insel, 2000), p. 13.

values was no longer credible in the modern world. Virtually all of his works are replete with ethical considerations, but the main books that are commonly referred to in this context are *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1883), *Jenseits von Gut und Böse: Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft* (1886), and *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887). Nietzsche's view of moral life can be seen as a response to Kant's account of autonomy. While he agrees with Kant with regards to the self-determining will of the individual as a focus of ethical action, Nietzsche departs radically from the Kantian view in his conception of how the will decides and acts autonomously. For Nietzsche, morality is concerned with ideals which are posited by the individual. Unlike in Kant's conception, these ideals are not in need of any universal validity or internal consistency. Furthermore, they need not be conducive to the compatibility of individual wills in the social sphere. The ideals and virtues of the *Übermenschen* are the expression of their own individual choice, and require no further justification either from the inherent nature of the virtue or ideal itself, or from the general approbation of others. The only criterion seems to be that the virtues be life enhancing in the sense that they are conducive to the expression of the will to power. Likewise, the ideals posited by the *Übermenschen* have a claim on them alone, and are not universalized or extended to others.

Following this discussion, it seems pertinent to expand on that contested and misunderstood concept in Nietzsche's positive ethical program – that of the *Übermensch*, or 'overman,' cited above. This concept has often been read as a forerunner of the Nazi ideology and the superiority of the German race, but Nietzsche, who never hesitated to express condemnation for his fellow compatriots, was anything but a racist or nationalist. It has also been disputed whether the notion of the *Übermensch* was intended as a prediction about the future in a nihilistic age, or as a concrete normative proposal for ethics. Ultimately, the *Übermensch* can be understood as an ideal or positive model for an ethics without transcendent grounding. In a world after the death of God, the *Übermensch* is the one who has the strength and clear-headedness to receive life on its own terms without delusions or promises, and who has the capacity and creativity to posit his own values in place of the traditional Christian moral code. Whilst the *Übermensch* would have radically different conceptions of the good, one normative characteristic that they would have in common would be their affirmation of life as it is, and their expression of this in

the exercising of their natural powers, a grain of thought that comes to fruition in twentieth-century existentialism.

No other philosopher of the early twentieth century wrote more on Nietzsche than Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), the author of *Sein und Zeit* (1927) and arguably German philosophy's chief spokesperson of existentialism. Celebrated for his existential and phenomenological explorations of the question of *Dasein*, or Being-in-the-world, Heidegger is commonly regarded as one of the most important philosophers of the twentieth century. *Dasein* is first and foremost a concept of temporality. There could be no time except for *Dasein*; conversely there can be no *Dasein* without there being time. Just as *Dasein* is essentially 'in' space, *Dasein* is equally 'in' time. This 'in' does necessarily function in the same way as when we talk about a coat being *in* the wardrobe or how the French Revolution took place *in* the eighteenth century. *Dasein* constitutes or projects temporality. Time is 'originally with' *Dasein*. In this regard Heidegger shows himself as a successor of Kant in *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. For Heidegger, time is an *a priori* condition for Being-in-the-world. Time does not exist apart from human consciousness or *Dasein*, and all 'objective' time is based on this 'subjective condition.' Heidegger also uses *Dasein*'s existence as Being-in-the-world to describe a concept of *everydayness*. Heidegger brings attention to the everyday features of the world that in practical activities tend to go unnoticed, because the everyday life world presents itself as a holistic context of significance of which individual components are easily overlooked. Heidegger acknowledges that everyday Being-with-*Dasein* represents the existentialist concept of Being-with-others, and this eventually leads to bad faith. As Woelfel explains: 'Heidegger talked about *Das Man*, the anonymous or 'they'-self of everyday life, which passively conforms to what 'they' (the surrounding society) say and do. He describes this state as a 'falling away' from what we are as finitely free beings, characterized by the tranquillizing, disintegration, and alienation of the self'.²⁷ The other end of the spectrum from this 'falling away' (bad faith) is authenticity, a key concern also in French existentialism. Authenticity is something that individual *Dasein* must work to attain. It is not obtained by isolation from

²⁷ James W. Woelfel, *The Existentialist Legacy and Other Essays on Philosophy and Religion* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006), p. 15.

others, but is rather a modification of the 'they'-self. For Heidegger, authenticity is, as Haim Gordon phrases it, the 'conditioning of gathering one's existence from its dissipated immersion in the world of the they into one's most proper way of being [...] Authenticity may be achieved but never permanently attained, because Dasein is inevitably immersed in the average everyday'.²⁸

As the above discussion reveals, existentialist notions come in many shades and colours of philosophical thought. And yet, the movement of existentialism is not just confined to the disciplines of philosophy. As Medard Boss put it, existentialism has a potential voice in 'everything in which human beings have something to do'.²⁹ The art world is a particularly germane instance. The sculptures of Swiss artist Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966) are seen as a quintessential expression of existentialism. Although Giacometti never claimed to have pursued existentialist ideas in his art, his sculptures can be viewed as epitomes of existentialist humanity – alienated, solitary, and disoriented in the world's immensity. His sculpture 'Homme signalent' ('Man Pointing') from 1947, reveals a thin, featureless figure with rough, agitated surfaces, which appears engulfed by the vast space surrounding him, imparting a sense of remoteness and vulnerability. The paintings of Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985) similarly capture a tortured vision of the world through manipulated materials. Other European painters whose names have been associated with existentialism are Henri Michaux (1899-1984), Jean Fautrier (1898-1964), Germaine Richier (1902-1959), and Bram van Velde (1895-1981). The thoughts and insights of existentialist writers such as Sartre, Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) have also had conspicuous echoes in theatrical works, most notably in Samuel Beckett's (1906-1989) literary canon. Existentialist themes are likewise traceable in the plays of Tennessee Williams (1911-1983), Arthur Miller (1915-2005), and Jean Anouilh (1910-1987). Further writers to have portrayed the struggle and predicament of man in their works include Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881), Leo Tolstoy (1829-1910), T.S. Eliot (1888-1965), Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), Graham Greene (1904-1991), Eugene Ionesco (1909-1994), and Harold Pinter (1930-2008), to name only

²⁸ Haim Gordon, 'Authenticity', in *Dictionary of Existentialism*, ed. Haim Gordon (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1999), pp. 22-27, p. 24.

²⁹ Medard Boss, 'Recent Considerations in Daseinanalysis' (1988), in *The Humanistic Psychologist* 16.1, pp. 58-74, p. 63.

some branches of this extensive literary *arbre existentialiste*. Existentialism also developed a rich and established basis in early to mid-twentieth-century psychology. For instance, the existentialist notion that our conscious experience is of particular value became central to the approach taken by *Gestalt* psychologists.³⁰ It also extended into the realms of education, notably in ‘open schooling’ and aesthetic education, where more focus is given to the individual student. Here the student is encouraged to experiment and explore, and students and teachers commonly work together as collaborators.

Few if any other modern Western philosophical movements have had as profound an impact on such an array of academic disciplines as has existentialism. Its influence was also very much felt on general, day-to-day culture. As mentioned previously, the ‘epicentre of this impact was certainly Paris, especially the Latin Quarter of Paris’,³¹ where the likes of Sartre, de Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty and Camus were becoming the major cultural force in defining the intellectual debate of the generation. They produced newspaper articles, radio shows, plays and novels, as well as the leading left-wing periodical *Les temps modernes*, which appeared to impart a ‘new way of thinking’ among the post-war French populace. Paramount to the success of Sartrean existentialism, in particular, was, without doubt, the historical context surrounding it, for it is by no means a coincidence that existentialism resonated so intensely among the intellectual vanguard in the era of two catastrophic world wars. As the Iron Curtain descended, and in the wake of the Holocaust and Hiroshima, existentialism emerged as the post-war cultural force most capable of *responding* to, and engaging with Europe’s post-1945 trauma and anxieties. It was similarly a time of deep uncertainty in Paris, which had been under German occupation until August 1944. Against this background of torment and despair, Sartre and de Beauvoir’s advocating of a value system based upon the individual’s commitment to bettering him- or herself outside the sanctions of traditional belief systems was a captivating prospect. Theirs was a philosophy based

³⁰ *Gestalt* therapy is a form of existentialist psychotherapy that emphasises the role of personal responsibility. It rose to prominence in 1912, and involved three psychologists at the University of Frankfurt: Max Wertheimer (1880-1943), Kurt Koffka (1886-1941), and Wolfgang Köhler (1887-1967). Fritz Perls (1893-1970), Laura Perls (1905-1990), and Paul Goodman (1911-1972) developed this further in the 1940s and 1950s.

³¹ William McBride, ‘Existentialism as a Cultural Movement,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism*, ed. Steven Crowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 50-69, p. 50.

upon freedom of choice, and a belief in the individual's capacity for self-realisation, which appealed to a nation's need to pose questions, and to reflect on the ostensible hollowness of man's existence. Whilst the majority of French people never fully engaged with the extensive philosophical substructures of existentialism, and most likely never grappled with the subtleties of the movement's antecedents, existentialism experienced 'a remarkable vogue' in post-war France,³² and none were perceived to have been more profoundly affected or influenced by this philosophical fad than the young generation.

It would be a mistake to suppose, however, that post-war French existentialism was not affected by ideas outside of France. The shock waves of existentialism reverberated far beyond Europe, and reports were even traced in popular transatlantic publications, such as leading American fashion magazines and journals like *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Life magazine* and *Partisan Review*,³³ from which readers learned about the existentialist 'caverns,' or basement bistros of Paris. It was in the latter publication that American philosophy professor William Barrett first discussed Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. Barrett's review of the work was not without its criticism, but he nevertheless praises it as 'the Bible of French existentialism'.³⁴ Barrett's 1958 publication *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy*, similarly served to communicate concepts of existentialist thinking to the English-speaking world. Here his admiration of Sartre is, once again, resounding. He describes *Being and Nothingness* as 'a great, uneven, brilliant and verbose tome,' and flatteringly labels Sartre as 'one of the most brilliant minds alive – sometimes too brilliant, for the greatest mind needs a little saving streak of earth-bound stupidity somewhere [...]'.³⁵ Adulation aside, *Irrational Man* must also be credited for offering a highly systematic and comprehensive explanation on the fundamentals of Sartrean philosophy, as the below citation demonstrates:

³² Richard Ivan Jobs, *Riding the New Wave: Youth and the Rejuvenation of France after the Second World War* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 215.

³³ Judaken, *Situating*, p. 20.

³⁴ William Barrett, 'Talent and Career of Jean-Paul Sartre,' in *Partisan Review* 13.2 (Spring 1946), pp. 237-246, p. 239.

³⁵ William Barrett, *Irrational Man*, p. 246.

But again like every humanism, it leaves unasked the question: What is the root of man? In this search for roots for man – a search that has, as we have seen, absorbed thinkers and caused the malaise of poets for the last hundred and fifty years – Sartre does not participate. He leaves man rootless. This may be because Sartre himself is the quintessence of the urban intellectual – perhaps the most brilliant urban intellectual of our time, but still with the inevitable alienation of this type. He seems to breathe the air of the modern cities, its cafés, faubourgs, and streets, as if there were no other home for man.³⁶

Whilst existentialism remained something of an underground tradition in American philosophical institutions, it thrived in the analytic tradition, and propelled Barrett and Hazel Barnes towards international recognition, both of whom became translators and interlocutors of existentialism. Female existentialist figure Simone de Beauvoir was also majorly influential in the flourishing ‘second wave’ of American feminism in the 1960s. The ‘mother of movement’ Betty Friedan learned much from de Beauvoir about the structural and existential forces that conditioned women to accept their position as ‘the second sex,’ and encouraged them to redefine their roles along more egalitarian lines. On a general cultural level, New York in particular became the target of a sort of ‘existentialist offensive,’ with Sartre and de Beauvoir guiding the way. Both of them toured there, Sartre first as a reporter for the newspaper *Combat*, and again soon thereafter as a lecturer, and de Beauvoir first as a lecturer at several different colleges and universities. What is evident from their reports is that ‘existentialism’ was already a familiar term with many Americans, who were at the same time fascinated to learn more about the philosophical movement. Although the original texts would for the most part not become available in English translation until 1947-48 at the earliest (Hazel Barnes’ translation of *Being and Nothingness* was first published in 1956), it is evident that already in the 1940s there was a growing awareness in the United States that a serious intellectual movement was underway.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 250.

As Martin Woessner explains in his chapter on existentialism ‘Angst Across the Channel,’ the philosophical movement was introduced in England primarily by two German Jewish émigrés, Werner Brock and F. H. Heinemann, who facilitated the transmission of the existentialist themes of life and existence.³⁷ With regards to Sartrean existentialism, it was the novelist and philosopher Iris Murdoch who popularised the movement by introducing Sartre and the themes of the Paris school to English readers. A. J. Ayer, who was later to become the dean, so to speak, of the British philosophers of his generation, was also a major player in the dissemination of Sartrean ideas. At times Ayer showed a notable lack of enthusiasm for Sartre’s philosophy. In 1945 he wrote ‘*L’Être et le Néant* [...] is exceedingly long, over 700 large and closely printed pages, always difficult and often obscure’.³⁸ He and others were also of the opinion that Sartre did little more than revise the ideas of Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit*. Ayer did, however, grudgingly acknowledge the importance of *Sein und Zeit*, saying that its ‘metaphysical pessimism,’ which fit comfortably ‘[with]in the existentialist tradition,’ was in accordance with the spirit of the age.³⁹

French existentialism was also heavily influential in Spain and Latin America, although the movement was already a generative philosophical current long before it rose to prominence in the United States and Europe. Since the birth of Latin America’s first autonomous universities following the region’s independence from Spain, Latin American philosophy has been saturated with existentialist themes. A post-colonial identity crisis and Latin America’s marginal situation led the nations to persistently muse over the nature of being. Philosophers preoccupied themselves with questions of *becoming* authentically Latin American and of *authentic* versus *inauthentic* philosophical practise. It is especially this focus on inter-subjective relations and national and continental identity throughout Spanish and Latin American history that distinguishes the movement from its European counterparts. The influential works of Spanish liberal philosopher and essayist José Ortega y Gasset were strongly embraced as a new way of recasting existence, culture, and

³⁷ Cf. Martin Woessner, ‘Angst Across the Channel’, in *Situating Existentialism: Key Texts in Context*, ed. Jonathan Judaken and Robert Bernasconi (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 235-292.

³⁸ A. J. Ayer, ‘Novelist-Philosophers: V— Jean-Paul Sartre,’ in *Horizon* 12.67 (1945), pp. 12-26, p. 12.

³⁹ Ibid.

history, as they ultimately contributed to become an integral part of Latin American self-identity and self-understanding. The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 forced Ortega y Gasset into exile in Buenos Aires, where he taught and gained a group of followers. By the time he returned to Madrid in 1945, the philosophies of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and Heidegger had become heavily entrenched in Spanish culture in helping the nation recast a 'Latin American, philosophical account of its own marginalization, historical, and axiological commitments vis-à-vis its colonial past'.⁴⁰ Another important figure in the development of phenomenological and existentialist philosophies in Latin America is Ortega y Gasset's compatriot disciple and close friend, José Gaos (1900-1969). From his earliest critical study of Husserl (*La crítica del psicologismo en Husserl*, 1930) to his introduction to phenomenology (*Introducción a la fenomenología*, 1960), Gaos defined himself as a key contributor in the dissemination of phenomenological ideas in Latin America, in addition to his meticulous Spanish translation of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*. Francisco Romero (1891-1962) is also considered a leader in the Latin American philosophical movement, especially in Argentina. He is particularly celebrated for his contributions to recasting the myth of the gaucho of Martín Fierro within the framework of a philosophical anthropology that conjugated the phenomenological, essential concepts of transcendence, intentionality, and existence with Hegelian-Marxist notions of historical self-consciousness and social transformation. The works of Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges similarly reveal a preoccupation with the universal theme of human existence, and his metaphysical attitude can be located in his restlessness tied to the question of time, and his awareness of human transience on the path of oblivion. Borges deals for instance with the mystifying nature of existence in his 1941 short story *El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (*The Garden of Forking Paths*), in which he describes an infinite series of times, which blur into a tangled web of divergent, convergent and parallel times. In this sense Borges is depicting time as a nonlinear, existential puzzle. A further novelist to have played a significant role in the development of the Spanish American essay in the twentieth century was the Argentine Ernesto Sábato (1911-2011). Influenced particularly by Sartre and Camus, Sábato was a thinker of the

⁴⁰ Nythamar de Oliveira, 'Introduction: From Continental Europe to Latin America', in *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy*, ed. Susana Nuccetelli, Ofelia Schutte, and Otávio Bueno (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 255-276, p. 261.

European humanist tradition. His intellectual evolution and his decision to write literature were largely governed by several extraneous factors: his disillusionment with science (he received his doctorate in physics in 1938), his initial allegiance to and subsequent retraction from the Communist Party, and his first hand experience of Europe on the brink of the Second World War. Despite his involvement with the surrealist group in Paris in 1939, and 'his intellect [...] succumbed to the fascination of the irrational',⁴¹ Sábato's work is heavily coloured by existentialist ideas. This is shown not only in matters that immediately concerned him, namely freedom, evil, rebellion against the dehumanizing abstractions of social normalities, the psychological impact of every day tasks, but also in his embittered, sombre, and anguished tone, seen in such works as *Yugo de niebla* (1948), *El Túnel* (1948), *Sombras al sol* (1951), and *La ciudad y el viento* (1961). His fiction has been recognised and celebrated by the likes of Albert Camus, Graham Greene, Thomas Mann, and the Italian author and poet, Salvatore Quasimodo.

Finally, to conclude this brief and necessarily selective overview of the transnational dissemination of existentialist ideas in the twentieth century, let us contemplate in preliminary outline its reception in post-war German culture, which will be the subject of the following chapters of this study. In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, Germans felt plagued by feelings of anguish and anxiety. The nation had lost not just a war and an ideology of supremacy and racial superiority, but was simultaneously confronted with the extraordinary and unprecedented magnitude of terror and devastation it had unleashed on the world. As this thesis aims to demonstrate, this condition of dejection and torment came to be articulated widely in its national literature, and one of the early instigators of this initiative was the German writer, Alfred Andersch (1914-1980). For Andersch, the *tabula rasa* of post-war Germany was an opportunity to rid the nation of its fascist past, and to 'cleanse' the German spirit in one single creative act. Using Sartre's 1943 play *Les Mouches* (*The Flies*) as a springboard, which recounts the story of Orestes and his sister Electra in a quest to avenge the death of their father Agamemnon, King of Argos, by killing their mother Clytemnestra and her husband Aegisthus, who had

⁴¹ José Miguel Oviedo, 'The Modern Essay in Spanish America', in *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature*, vol. 2, ed. Roberto Gonzalez Echevarría, Enrique Pupo-Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 365-424, p. 408.

deposed and murdered him, Andersch identified a chance in existentialism to break away from Germany's atrocious past and embrace a future obligated to freedom. This guarantee of a new beginning has often been referred to as the 'Stunde Null,' or 'zero hour' of German literary history, although as many scholars have already ascertained, this concept was at best a myth. As a matter of fact, Andersch unintentionally gave credence to this when he declared in his seminal essay *Deutsche Literatur in der Entscheidung* from 1948, 'The significance of existentialism is self-evident from the fact that it has worked its way throughout every camp [of thought]'.⁴² Although post-war existentialism's roots extend back to a myriad of French, German, and Danish sources which precede the end of German fascism, it was not only Alfred Andersch who was captivated by existentialism in the immediate post-war era. Other writers include Herman Kasack (1896-1966), Arno Schmidt (1914-1979) with his 1949 publication *Leviathan oder Die beste der Welten*, Max Frisch (1911-1991) with *Stiller* (1954) and *Mein Name sei Gantenbein* (1964), and other authors such as Wolfgang Koeppen (1906-1996), and Günter Grass (1927-2015). Less overt but nevertheless discernable references to existentialism are similarly traceable in the works of Catholic writers Elisabeth Langgässer (1899-1950) and Heinrich Böll (1917-1985), although this point will be expanded upon in more detail later. Another intriguing angle from which to view the infiltration of French existentialist ideas in post-war Germany is that of exile writing. Whereas post-fascism existentialism 'endorsed a radical individualism borne out of temporary nihilism',⁴³ existentialism in the exile experience was steeped in isolation, seclusion, and despair. In this regard, Sartre and Camus' cast of aliens, outsiders and strangers, who strove in vain to find a sense of belonging, most notably Meursault in Camus' 1942 novel *L'Étranger* (*The Stranger*), or Antoine Roquentin in Sartre's 1938 work *La Nausée* (*Nausea*), is curiously reminiscent of those protagonists (in exile novels by writers like Hermann Bloch, Klaus Mann, and Stefan Zweig), for whom solitariness and futility were cornerstones of existence. The question as to how far the exilic experience can be understood in connection to the philosophical and literary permutations of existentialism offers no definitive conclusion. These tentative thematic correspondences are nevertheless justification

⁴² Alfred Andersch, *Deutsche Literatur in der Entscheidung*, p. 133.

⁴³ Richard Langston, *Visions of Violence: German Avant-Gardes After Fascism* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008), p. 62.

to contemplate the dissemination of existentialist philosophy in war-ravaged Germany.

KEY THEMES OF EXISTENTIALISM

DAS ICH

As suggested by my earlier survey, and especially the close ties between existentialism and German idealism, the first key theme within the unformulated existentialist manifesto is the perennial problem of the nature of the self, *das Ich*, in the form of the human ego. The idealist philosopher to have most strongly engaged with the continuous actualisation of man's will, freedom, and, as such, authentic existence in the empirical world was arguably Johann Gottlieb Fichte. In his theorising about the self, Fichte made manifold methodological and substantial contributions to our understanding of the human mind and its relation to the physical and moral world. Fichte is widely viewed as one of the founding proponents of German idealism, whose philosophy bridges the ideas of Immanuel Kant and those of his idealist contemporary Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. One particular feature of Fichte's philosophical writing is that they present a particularly unwelcoming exterior, for his convoluted grammar and linguistic artificialities envelop all the visions of his system in an air of mysticism. Even the order of exposition followed in the most widely studied version of his *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (1794) defies clear interpretation, despite being intended to clearly outline the lectures on his system that he delivered in Jena. As Walter E. Wright affirms, '[t]he difficulty of Fichte's style, more than anything else, is responsible for his relative obscurity'.⁴⁴ Wright also observes, however, that the final analysis in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* is not as inaccessible as it first appears; rather, 'if it is to be understood, and if it is to communicate something of value to us, then his system must be read as an analysis of human finitude'.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Walter E. Wright, 'Existentialism, Idealism, and Fichte's Concept of Coherence', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 13. I, January 1975, pp. 37-42, p. 37.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Fichte's writing can be viewed as primarily ethical and practical rather than speculative. The question he poses at the outset is not 'what can we know?', but rather 'what is the mission of man?' It is only after this initial query that a second, weightier question can be asked, namely 'what are the essential conditions that make man exist?' The following discussion will begin with an exploration of Fichte's autonomous world-creating ego and, most crucially, how it underpins his preoccupation with the doctrine of freedom, a doctrine that was later to underpin so much of existentialist thought. It is an extraordinarily difficult task to approach the issue of freedom from the 'correct' point of view. While the problem is one that inherently concerns human action, freedom 'is not [...] a kind of act to be classed with a person's other acts; it is rather something specific, which is common to all moral acts,' as Hartmann recognises.⁴⁶ Furthermore, it is important to remember that freedom is not a negative state of being free 'from something' but rather suggests a unique determination 'towards something.'

Before exploring the Fichtean position in greater depth, it is imperative to consider Fichte's engagement with and attitude towards his philosophical forerunners. Fichtean idealism can be understood as a development of Kantian transcendental idealism. In Section Six of the second introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre*, for instance, Fichte expresses his aims to dedicate his life to the task of producing a correct rendition of Kant's philosophy: The *Wissenschaftslehre* '[stimme] mit der Kantischen Lehre vollkommen überein, und [sey] keine andere als die wohlverstandene Kantische.' Yet whilst Fichte considered himself a Kantian, his Kantianism markedly deviated from that of his philosophical predecessor.⁴⁷ Kant presupposed the thing-in-itself (*Ding an sich*), or the noumenon. This can be understood as a thing as it might be apart from the way it appears to man and is experienced by man. Kant claimed that one can never know whether there is actually anything to things beyond what we experience of them, but maintained that we can and indeed must entertain the thought that there is. A more comprehensive philosophical explanation of the thing-in-itself is provided by Horrigan, who

⁴⁶ Nicolai Hartmann, *Moral Freedom* vol. 3 of *Ethics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2004), p. 112.

⁴⁷ This view is supported by Frederick Copleston, cf.: *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 7/ii: *Schopenhauer to Nietzsche* (New York: Image/Doubleday, 1963).

describes it as an ‘extra-mental, extra-subjective knowledge that would be the cause of the raw sense data of the senses that would go to be formed by the two *a priori* forms of sensibility, namely, space and time (which are wholly subjective)’.⁴⁸

Against this background, Fichte’s project took a different direction. Copleston affirms how ‘Kant’s Copernican revolution was a great step forward, and for Fichte there could be no question of moving backwards to a pre-Kantian position. If one had any understanding of the development of philosophy and of the demands of modern thought, one could only go forward and complete Kant’s work. And this meant eliminating the thing-in-itself.’⁴⁹

Fichte believed that Kant’s noumenal reality restricted and conditioned the activity of the transcendental ego and suggested that in order for the human ego to be fully liberated mankind must disregard this ineffectual appendix, i.e. the noumenon. Since idealism dictates that that which cannot be known doesn’t exist, it is on these grounds that Fichte justified his rejection of Kant’s extra-subjective noumenon as unknowable. The young Fichte took a crucial step in expanding the theory of freedom, which was a crucial issue in philosophy around 1800, yet from the point of view of his doctrine of science. Fichte was predominantly interested in man’s innate, metaphysical ego, as opposed to the ego that exists empirically. For him, the ego represented the carrier and determinant of human freedom. The primacy of the ethical and practical in Fichte’s writing is predominantly identifiable in the fact that, for him, the essence of the human ego consists in the will, and that the world, or what Fichte calls the ‘non-ego’, cannot be conceived of as an object of contemplation, or a piece of knowledge, but rather as a hurdle to overcome. Man must not contemplate the world; rather, the world is the world of man’s duties. At the heart of Fichte’s philosophy is a triadic dialectic between the ‘pure ego,’ the ‘empirical ego,’ and the ‘non-ego.’ This configuration is necessary for man to establish his identity and consciousness of self. While the ‘pure ego’, itself an expression of absolute freedom, cannot contradict itself, the ‘empirical ego’, conditioned by the ‘non-ego’, is self-contradictory and not free. As such, the aim of man is to bring himself into absolute identity with himself.

⁴⁸ Paul Gerard Horrigan, *Epistemology: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Knowledge* (New York: iUniverse, 2007), p. 54.

⁴⁹ Copleston, *ibid.*, p. 3.

Fichte understands the ego to be the finite and the infinite simultaneously. The ego is infinite because it is a 'thinking reality,' for in its inexhaustible activity it can think all things. The ego is also finite as 'thought reality,' because each of its thought acts is confined to a determinate reality. For Fichte, therefore, the ego is to be understood as free and absolute activity, wherein life articulates itself by means of boundless finite acts. The ego is both 'thinking reality' and 'thought reality.' The ego is also known as the 'pure ego,' 'ego' because it is subject, and 'pure' because it draws out everything from itself and thus *a priori*. It is this issue of the freedom, or non-freedom, of the thinking subject in its relation to thought reality that also underlies most existentialist philosophy.

FREEDOM

In addition to the philosophical concept of the self, both idealist and existentialist thinking circulates around the notion of freedom and self-constitution. This shall be the second existentialist theme in our virtual manifesto. This twin desire to recognize being as it is and to construct a system originally came together in Kantian philosophy. Immanuel Kant's system was an attempt to ground a system of philosophy concerned with the free and autonomous use of reason. At the very core of his ethics are the concepts of self-determination and autonomy: freedom consists in giving oneself one's own law out of one's own essence. According to the Kantian maxim 'du sollst, denn du kannst,' the right action must always be possible, or put differently: I must always be free to perform it. The moral agent judges that he can do things because he is conscious that he ought, and he comprehends that he is free, a fact which, but for the moral law, he would never have known. In other words, the practise of morality forces the idea of freedom upon us. Kant's notion of freedom becomes clearer when seen in the context of the problem that it was intended to solve. Rational beings exist not only as self-conscious centres of knowledge, but also as agents. Their reason is not separated from their agency, but forms a constitutive part of it. As such, for a rational being, there is not only action, but also the *question* of action, i.e. *what shall I do?* which requires a reasoned answer. Mankind's rationality is expressed in the fact that some actions are intentional, for they are a product of one's will. Of all such actions, the questions may be asked,

Why do that? and *Why should I perform only good acts and not evil ones?* These questions demand neither a cause nor explanation, but a reason. If someone were to ask a pickpocket why they robbed an old lady of her purse, the answer ‘because electrical impulses from my brain triggered muscular contractions which resulted in my putting my hand in her bag’ would seem strange and insolent, however accurate as a causal explanation. The answer ‘because I am poor and need to feed my family’ may be an insufficient justification, but it is certainly comprehensible.

Kant’s moral philosophy stems from the combination of the idea of transcendental freedom with that of an imperative of reason. He believes that reasoning about ends must always presuppose just the kind of transcendental freedom that his metaphysics claims exists. Freedom is the power to will an end of action for oneself. An act that originates from the individual can be attributed only to him or her, and is therefore in a real sense his or hers. In respect of such an action one is free. One acts freely whenever one acts, and unfreely whenever some other agency limits or restricts one’s actions. Mankind does not consult his or her desires, interests or any other ‘empirical condition,’ since that is to subject oneself to the causality of nature. One simply reflects on the action, and chooses it for one’s own sake. As Roger Scruton notes, ‘this is the paradigm of a free action: one that is brought into being by reason alone. Such an action can be attributed [...] to no “natural” force, no chain of “empirical” causality. It arises spontaneously out of the rational processes that constitute my will’.⁵⁰

It is precisely at this juncture where Kantian notions of human freedom reappear, in more rhetorical form, in existentialist writing. As Kant affirms, freedom does not belong to nature, but precisely to the ‘intelligible’ or transcendental realm to which categories like causality do not apply. Mankind exists in a world of nature, as an ‘appearance’ among others. This recognition that we can conceive of human beings independent from the objectivity of the natural world retained its attractiveness during the nineteenth century, as seen in its adoption by Kierkegaard, and also features as a centrepiece in Sartre’s philosophy of freedom. Both philosophers

⁵⁰ Roger Scruton, ‘Kant’, in *German Philosophers: Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche*, ed. Roger Scruton, Peter Singer, Christopher Janaway, Michael Tanner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 7-104, p. 72.

identify the source of human meaning concretely in the immediate experience of making ungrounded choices, and although their respective approaches were less sympathetic to pure rational speculation than was Kant's, they also conceived of freedom in sharp opposition to nature.

Kant's philosophical concern with the concept of freedom also made a profound and lasting impression on subsequent idealist philosophers, most notably, of course, Fichte, as we saw above. As Beck affirms, 'Kant's theory of human freedom was to become a veritable *Leitmotiv* of Fichte's philosophy throughout its development'.⁵¹ In the idealist philosophies of man, insistence on freedom is a conspicuous feature. But it does not follow, as shown above with the notion of the human ego, that the concept of 'freedom' is always used or understood in precisely the same sense. Let us begin by examining the Fichtean concept of freedom.

As a young man, Fichte was a fervent advocate of the French Revolution, which he viewed as an opportunity to liberate humanity from all strictures of social and political life that hampered man's free moral development. Central to Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, as also his philosophy overall, is the doctrine of freedom. 'Mein System ist vom Anfange bis zu Ende nur eine Analyse des Begriffs der Freiheit [...]' Fichte affirmed in a letter to Karl Leonhard Reinhold on January 8, 1800.⁵² With Fichte, the emphasis is placed on individual freedom as manifested in action. For Fichte, man represents, from one perspective, a system of natural drives, instincts and impulses. The individual is similarly not restricted to the automatic satisfaction of one desire after another. Instead, he can direct his activity towards an ideal goal and act in accordance with a sense of duty. As is similar in Kantian notions of freedom, it tends to involve rising above the life of sensual impulse and acting as a rational, moral being. And Fichte is inclined to speak as though activity were its own end, emphasising free action for the sake of free action. Although Fichte's primary emphasis lies on the individual's activity and on his rising above the slavery of natural drives and impulses to a life of action in accordance with duty, he sees, of

⁵¹ Gunnar Beck, *Fichte and Kant on Freedom, Rights, and Law* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), p. 23.

⁵² Fichte to Karl Leonhard Reinhold in Kiel, 8. January 1800, *Gesamtausgabe der Bayrischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, vol. III/4 (Stuttgart: Friedrich Fromm, 1973), p. 182.

course, that some content has to be given to the idea of free moral action. And he does this by underlining the concept of moral vocation, or ‘Bestimmung des Menschen’.⁵³ Man’s vocation, the series of actions that he ought to perform in the world, is predominantly dictated by his social circumstance, for example by his role as the father of a family. With this, Fichte meant to lend concrete content and individual determination to the Kantian formal moral imperative, creating the movement of a progressive extension of individuality and its limits. Following one’s moral vocation, man extends the domain of his individuality in the world.

A second strand of idealist principles concerning human freedom that deserves attention here is that of inter-subjectivity. As Fichte explains, the mutual recognition of one another that self-conscious, rational beings must exercise is not merely theoretical. It is recognition, also, in the sense of honouring one another’s status. In Hegel’s well-known discussion of the *Herr-Knecht* relationship, as outlined in *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), he establishes that the master cannot, as he hoped to, gain a sense of dignity through the recognition afforded to him by someone he regards merely as an object, a slave.⁵⁴ For such recognition to have significance and meaning, Hegel believes that it must come from individuals who are themselves respected and accorded human dignity. Both Hegel and Fichte express this point in terms of freedom: for an individual to have genuine appreciation of his or her own freedom as a rational being, they must recognise the freedom of others. This aspect of Hegelian thought is explored in depth in Simone de Beauvoir’s 1943 ‘metaphysical novel’ *She Came to Stay*. In the preface de Beauvoir opens with the Hegelian epigraph ‘Ebenso muss jedes Bewusstsein auf den Tode des anderen gehen’ (‘Chaque conscience veut la mort de l’autre’/‘each consciousness pursues the death of the other’).⁵⁵ Through this de Beauvoir is depicting Xavière as the *Knecht* figure who represents the sense of displacement or *délaissement* of the female ‘other.’ Whereas in Hegel’s *Phänomenologie des Geistes* the fight to the death is portrayed as a struggle between two men, in the closing scene de Beauvoir’s work, which can be read as an immense effort to depict

⁵³ Fichte employs this notion in this context in 1794: cf. ‘Bestimmung des Menschen’, in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 6 (Berlin: Nicolosius, 1845), pp. 167-319, p. 279.

⁵⁴ David Cooper, ‘Existentialism as a Philosophical Movement’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 27-49, p. 46.

⁵⁵ Simone de Beauvoir, *She Came to Stay* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006).

alterity and ‘otherness’, the battle is between two females, with Françoise playing the role of the honorary male *Herr* who annihilates the other who threatens her supremacy. This social aspect of an ideal of reciprocity or mutual recognition is also inherent in the works of Sartre. In *Existentialism and Humanism*, for instance, Sartre maintains that ‘freedom unrecognised remains abstract,’ and argues for a ‘universal freedom conditional’ in which our freedom ‘depends entirely on the freedom of others and their freedom depends on ours’.⁵⁶ What also appears to be a direct extension of Hegel’s *Herr-Knecht* discussion is Sartre’s emphasis, in a clearly egalitarian tone, that the ‘bourgeois oppressor is a victim of his own oppression’ and that his freedom ‘can be asserted only by the *recognition* bestowed upon it by other freedoms’.⁵⁷ Developing his concept of freedom in light of his experiences of the Resistance movement, Sartre can be seen here to be taking a notable step towards social consciousness and collective identity. Sartre’s German counterpart, Karl Jaspers, similarly incorporates this notion into his philosophy of freedom, stating: ‘Freiheit verwirklicht sich in Gemeinschaft. Ich kann nur frei sein in dem Maße wie die Anderen frei sind’.⁵⁸ Jaspers is indicating here that, in order to live as authentic beings – in full mindfulness, that is, of one’s own freedom – the individual must honour the freedom of others and work together with them to nurture a community of human beings who exist in recognition of their reciprocal freedoms. Clearly both idealist and existentialist thinkers have grappled with the notion of human freedom and the question of an individual’s relationship to others; what becomes equally clear is that, following in the footsteps of Kant, Fichte and Hegel, Heidegger, Sartre, de Beauvoir, Jaspers and Marcel all acknowledge that it is not only to respect one’s own freedom, but in doing so to respect the freedom of others as well.

The second strand of this discussion of human freedom will focus on freedom’s relationship to faith and atheism. One intriguing feature of nineteenth and twentieth-century existentialism is that it specifies no definitive religious position.

Existentialist philosophers can be placed into two general groups: theists and atheists. Whilst Kierkegaard, Marcel and Jaspers, as well as Protestant theologians

⁵⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism* (London: Methuen, 1970), p. 303-304.

⁵⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘Materialism and Revolution’, in *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, trans. Annette Michelson (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 198-256, p. 255.

⁵⁸ Karl Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (Munich: Piper, 1949), p. 196.

like Paul Tillich, Rudolph Bultmann, Karl Barth, and Emil Brunner can legitimately be classified as theists, Heidegger, Sartre, and most French existentialist thinkers can be considered, roughly and broadly, as atheists. Within the realms of existentialist thinking, this theological disparity is by no means a recent trend, for what is also evident in Kantian and Fichtean philosophy, namely those to have critically engaged with existentialist themes, is again a sense of theological ambiguity surrounding questions of human freedom. Whilst Kant and Fichte both repudiated the atheist label,⁵⁹ their tendencies to ground theism in practical rather than theoretical reason, as well as their seeking a rational kernel in Christian doctrine, was viewed, at times, as heretical. This tradition of ‘grappling’ with the God question, and the oscillation between the theistic and atheistic, is of particular interest here, for what can also be seen in twentieth-century existentialism is a mirror image of the deviating theological positions that characterised eighteenth-century pre-existentialist thinking. What the upcoming discussion on nihilism will demonstrate is how, on the one hand, twentieth-century existentialism shows a clear engagement with atheistic and nihilism themes. On the other hand, it simultaneously emphasises how the theistic and spiritual dimension within existentialist writing remains both extensive and relevant.

It was Baruch (later Benedict) de Spinoza (1632-1677) who gave rise to the debate about faith and atheism in eighteenth-century Europe, and his work remains a decisive influence in the development of atheistic and pantheistic thinking. Spinoza was, in a sense, an intensely religious figure – Novalis once referred to him as a ‘Gott-trunkener Mensch’⁶⁰ – but his God was radically different from that of the Christian tradition. In his most celebrated and influential philosophical treatise *Ethics, Demonstrated in Geometrical Order* (*Ethica, ordine geometrico demonstrata*), published posthumously in 1677, Spinoza defines God as ‘an absolutely infinite being; that is, a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of

⁵⁹ Kant formulates his own form of theism in his *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (1788), in which he affirms that belief in the existence of God is a postulate of practical reason. For his part, Fichte writes: ‘Nenne er mich etwa einen Akosmisten, nur nenne er mich nicht einen Atheisten’, cf. Johannes Gottlieb Fichte, *Werke*, ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte, vol. 5 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), p. 269.

⁶⁰ Novalis, ‘Fragmente und Studien 1799/1800’, in *Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, vol. 2, ed. Hans-Joachim Mähl & Richard Samuel (Munich: Hanser, 1978), p. 812.

which expresses eternal and infinite essence'.⁶¹ Spinoza's writing is early evidence of a radical change in Western thinking about the nature of God and human understanding. He rejected the supernaturalism of popular religion in favour of a scientist's confidence in the 'natural light' of reason. Spinoza saw divine law and scientific law as identical and believed that human beings learnt about God through rightly comprehending natural phenomena. Spinoza saw the mysterious events commonly attributed to God's unknowable will as no more than natural occurrences for which science was yet to proffer a plausible explanation. God exists, in other words, but only philosophically. Spinoza similarly differentiated between God and nature, perceiving the latter from his own angle on some occasions, and from God's angle on other occasions. Spinoza referred to the sum of beings, perceived from their own aspect as beings which are modes (*modi*) of a single, divine substance, as *natura naturata* (nature created by nature), and referred to God, who is the substance of all nature, as *natura naturans* (nature which creates nature).⁶² It was this denunciation of traditional virtues and his ontological arguments for the existence of God that led to accusations of atheism during Spinoza's lifetime.

The precise connections between the various strands of modern thought and the underlying pantheistic and atheistic revolutions remain a topic of scholarly contention. Furthermore, the *break* with the Christian worldview in the western tradition occurred in a subtle and gradual form.⁶³ Yet the importance of Spinozism in this regard cannot be disputed. Richard Popkin similarly points to the esoteric background of Spinoza's pantheism that anticipated the theological and intellectual crises of subsequent philosophical movements,⁶⁴ an assortment of examples for which are presented below. Clearly, it would be a gross misapprehension to label the following philosophers and writers as atheists, pantheists or spinozists. It must also be noted that theism still dominated eighteenth-century religious thinking, with the likes of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi sternly challenging the contentious 'atheistic'

⁶¹ Cf. Spinoza, *Ethics*, definition 6, part I.

⁶² Johannes Hirschberger, *Geschichte der Philosophie, vol 2: Neuzeit und Gegenwart* (Freiburg: Herder, 1976), p. 137. For full account of Spinoza's statement *Deus sive substantia sive natura* ('God or substance or nature'), cf.: Baruch Spinoza, *Ethica 1*, proposition 25.

⁶³ Jan Olof Bengtsson, 'Idealism and the Pantheistic Revolution: The "Big Picture" and Why it is Needed', in *Anglo-American Idealism: Thinkers and Ideas*, ed. James Connelly & Stamatoula Panagakou (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 107-131, p. 123.

⁶⁴ Cf. Richard Popkin, 'Spinoza, Neoplatonic Kabbalist?', in *Neo-Platonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. Lenn E. Goodman (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 387-409.

positions of his contemporaries, Fichte in particular. Most central to this discussion are the implications and repercussions of Spinozism in directing and guiding Kantian and post-transcendental idealist thinking in understanding the status of God, the individual, of the moral order, and of freedom.

One of the most notable features of Kantian philosophy is its inclination towards reason and rationality. This is rightly suggested in the titles *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781), and *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* (1793). Rationalistic religious belief of the period typically proposed to base religious belief on the metaphysical proofs of the existence of God, yet it was Kant's momentous 1781 work that polemically challenged this viewpoint, enforcing the view that nature and the intrinsic limitations of human thought and knowledge confute such metaphysical demonstrations. The faith Kant has in mind is a purely rational faith, and one that is 'grounded in practical (action-guiding, moral) reason rather than in theoretical reason',⁶⁵ hence his term *Vernunftreligion*. Again, whilst this position cannot be considered atheistic, Kantianism, in the wake of Spinozism, came to represent an important current of eighteenth-century scholarship that centred itself upon the existence of God and the question of whether His existence can be rationally proved.

Fichte is a particularly interesting case when one considers his connections with Spinozist philosophical sources. The idealist thinker became embroiled in the so-called *Atheismusstreit* and was branded an atheist following the 1798 publication of the blatantly atheistic article by Friedrich Karl Forberg 'Über die Entwicklung des Begriffs der Religion,' to which Fichte prefaced his own essay. Fichte's unique religious theory resulted in accusations of atheism and nihilism, the latter of which will be expounded upon in the following pages. Fichte purportedly rejected many conventional religious notions, including the divine creation of the world, the substantiality and personality of a deity, and the temporal or eternal retribution of a supreme being. The *Atheismusstreit* ultimately cost Fichte his professorship at the

⁶⁵ Robert Merrihew Adams, 'Introduction', in *Kant: Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: And Other Writings*, ed. Allen Wood & George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. vii-xxxii, p. vii.

University of Jena in 1799.

Hegel's principal reactions to Spinozism are also noteworthy. Unmistakably, the two philosophers present deviating views on the nature of God: Hegel accuses Spinoza's God or Nature as being static, compared to the Hegelian God who is dynamic. In this way, God unfolds himself in the world through a constant process of determinate negation. Additionally, in Spinoza's universe the human, or what Hegel calls *Geist*, is simply one of the finite beings within God. Hegel, on the other hand, claims that it is only through *Geist* that God can be truly actualized. Despite these fundamental differences, the German idealist nevertheless acknowledges the weight of Spinoza's contribution to philosophical thinking:

Wenn man anfängt mit philosophieren, muß man zuerst Spinozist sein. Die Seele muß sich baden in diesem Äther der einen Substanz, in der alles, was man für wahr gehalten hat, untergegangen ist. Es ist diese Negation alles Besonderen, zu der jeder Philosoph gekommen sein muß; es ist die Befreiung des Geistes und seine absolute Grundlage.⁶⁶

German Romantic theistic writer Johann Paul Friedrich Richter (Jean Paul) is another interesting case in this regard. Despite being a close friend and admirer of Jacobi, Jean Paul sought to engage with and respond to the strong wave of atheism that was sweeping across eighteenth-century Europe. In his *Rede des toten Christus vom Weltgebäude herab, daß kein Gott sei* (1796), which was embedded in his novel *Siebenkäs*, Jean Paul explores the idea of mankind in a universe without God, ruled by chaos and marked by abandonment. The final paragraph of the *Rede* confirms, however, that this does not point towards annihilation, but the possibility of an atheism that enables man to envisage a future life:

Für andere, die nicht so weit sind wie ein lesender Magistrand, merke ich noch an, daß mit dem Glauben an den Atheismus sich ohne Widerspruch der Glaube an Unsterblichkeit verknüpfen lasse; denn dieselbe Notwendigkeit,

⁶⁶ G. W. F. Hegel, 'Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte', in *G.W.F. Hegel: Werke (in zwanzig Bänden)*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer, Karl Markus Michel (Suhrkamp: Frankfurt a/M: 1969), p. 20.

die in diesem Leben meinen lichten Thautropfen von Ich in einem Blumenkelch und unter einer Sonne warf, kann es ja im zweiten wiederholen; ja noch leichter kann sie mich zum zweiten male verkörpern als zum ersten male.⁶⁷

In the *Rede*, the theistic writer also describes a prophetic vision, whose nihilistic and apocalyptic undertones are evocative of the nihilistic writing of Nietzsche that will appear less than a century later.

Das ganze geistige Universum wird durch die Hand des Atheismus zersprengt und zerschlagen in zahlenlose quecksilberne Punkte von Ichs, welche blinken, rinnen, irren, zusammen- und auseinanderfliehen, ohne Einheit und Bestand. Niemand ist im All so sehr allein als ein Gottesleugner – er trauert mit einem verwaiseten Herzen, das den größten Vater verloren, neben dem unermesslichen Leichnam der Natur, den kein Weltgeist regt und zusammenhält, und der im Grabe wächst; und er trauert so lange, bis er sich selber abbröckelt von der Leiche. Die ganze Welt ruht vor ihm wie die große, halb im Sande liegende ägyptische Sphinx aus Stein; und das All ist die kalte eiserne Maske der gestaltlosen Ewigkeit.⁶⁸

Clearly the *Rede* contemplates the possibility of a chaotic and godless universe, yet what cannot be overlooked in this regard Jean Paul's underlying philosophical and theological standpoint, namely that loneliness and abandonment will serve as the ultimate effects of atheism. Thus despite the writer's deliberations on the notion of atheism, it cannot be read as an atheistic avocation.

Niemand ist im All so sehr allein als ein Gottesläugner – er trauert mit einem verwaiseten Herzen, das den grössen Vater verloren, neben dem unermesslichen Leichnam der Natur, den kein Weltgeist regt und zusammenhält, und der im Grabe wächst; und er trauert so lange, bis er sich

⁶⁷ Johann Paul Friedrich Richter, *Sämtliche Werke: historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Eduard Berend et al. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1927), p. 248.

⁶⁸ Johann Paul Friedrich Richter, 'Rede des toten Christus vom Weltgebäude herab, daß kein Gott sei', in *Ersten Blumenstück des Siebenkäs: Werke*, vol. 2, ed. Gustav Lohmann (Munich: Hanser, 1959), pp. 266-271, p. 266.

selber abbröckelt von der Leiche. Die ganze Welt ruht vor ihm wie die grosse, halb im Sande liegende ägyptische Sphynx aus Stein; und das All ist die kalte eiserne Maske der gestaltlosen Ewigkeit.⁶⁹

In addition to Jean Paul's *Rede*, there are several other notable publications of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century that demonstrate a prevalent thematic interest in the notion of mankind in a Godless world, beginning with Novalis' *Hymnen an die Nacht* of 1800. In the work Novalis presents darkness as a place of knowledge and speaks of apocalyptic visions in the fifth, sixth and final hymns. As Malinowski observes, in this way the hymns 'can be read as poetic testimonials of Romantic melancholy'.⁷⁰ Ernst August Friedrich Klingemann's 1804 work *Die Nachtwachen des Bonaventura* also engages with atheistic themes. What is evidently a study into the 'darker' side of human nature, Klingemann's novel alludes to conditions of godlessness, fragmentation, loss of identity, and the nature of a divided self. This overwhelming sense of nothingness is effectively encapsulated in the words: 'Da sah ich mich selbst mit mir allein im Nichts'.⁷¹ Klingemann's godless void is also comparable to Heinrich von Kleist's 1808 drama *Die Hermannsschlacht*, where the same themes of remoteness, despair and a crisis of human identity can be made out: 'Wo komm ich her? [...] Aus nichts [...] Wo geh ich hin? [...] Ins Nichts [...] Wo bin ich? [...] Hart zwischen Nichts und Nichts'.⁷²

The Enlightenment of the eighteenth century reveals the progression of a new form of atheistic thinking, which sought to challenge traditional theistic values. Defined by Keiji Nishitani as "the first wave" of atheism in the modern era,⁷³ it saw the increasing denial of the existence of God from the standpoint of a mechanistic view of nature. To the degree that God disappears, humans as a controlling force of human destiny become self-empowered, and with this 'Mündigkeit,' in Kant's

⁶⁹ Johann Paul Friedrich Richter, *Sämtliche Werke*, p. 316.

⁷⁰ Bernadette Malinowski, 'German Romantic Poetry in Theory and Practice: The Schlegel Brothers, Schelling, Tieck, Novalis, Eichendorff, Brentano, and Heine', in *The Literature of German Romanticism*, ed. Dennis F. Mahoney (Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2004), pp. 147-169, p. 154.

⁷¹ Ernst August Friedrich Klingemann, *Die Nachtwachen des Bonaventura*, ed. J. Schillemeit (Frankfurt a/M: Insel, 1974), p. 168.

⁷² Heinrich von Kleist, *Die Hermannsschlacht: ein Drama in fünf Aufzügen* (Ditzingen: Reclam, 1963), p. 78f.

⁷³ Keiji Nishitani, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, trans. Graham Parkes & Setsuko Aihara (Albany, NY: New York Press, 1990), p. 71.

phrasing, comes man's freedom of choice and an increase of responsibility. But with the atheism that leads to self-empowerment and self-responsibility also came an increased doubt in the meaningfulness of life. This spawned the concept of nihilism, which too emerged from idealistic philosophy, as we shall see.

GOD AND NIHILISM

The reason the philosophical movement of nihilism deserves attention in this thesis on existentialism is twofold. Firstly, nihilism, as a godless human philosophy that rejects all positive values, beliefs, moral absolutes or life meanings, is inextricably linked to existentialism, in that it also concerns itself with the themes of freedom and the self. Secondly, and most crucially for the purposes of this dissertation, nihilism enables us to place existentialism's on-going 'grappling' with its diverse theistic and atheistic positions in a more illuminating context. Viewing nihilism as a development and intensification of eighteenth-century pantheism, what can be seen in twentieth-century existentialism is a denunciation and reformulation of the nihilistic position. Nihilism can broadly be understood as the state of belief in nothing, and represents a form of surrender or despair. It is a wallowing in nothingness, and a concern that humanity will be consumed by its own fears and anxieties. This results in a state of stagnation, immobility and, at worst, self-destruction. Twentieth-century existentialism, on the other hand, engages with nihilism in the way it *responds* to nihilism. It attempts to find a way out of nihilism, either through God, like Jaspers, Marcel or Tillich, or without God, like Sartre, Camus, and Heidegger. Both theistic and atheistic positions within existentialism can be viewed as a process of self-creation, about creating ground for man's own meaning, creating value and establishing his or her own world. One can assume the role of being the author of one's own existence. Regardless of the religious position, the existentialist proclaims that life is *not* meaningless. As such, the movement of nihilism is essential here, for it serves to accentuate how the on-going theistic and atheistic positions of twentieth-century existentialism have come full circle. Despite the committed and ardent atheism that characterises nihilistic thinking, the God question remains a matter of disagreement within twentieth-century existentialism, and simultaneously reveals how the movement has operated cyclically, returning to the theological disputes that characterised eighteenth-century thinking.

The task of adequately defining nihilism or determining the precise nature of the phenomenon that the term alludes to is thus a difficult one. In its basic sense, ‘nihilism’ stems from the Latin nihil, meaning ‘nothing.’ The same root is also traceable in the verb ‘to annihilate,’ meaning to reduce to non-existence, or to blot out of existence. Nihilism can thus be understood as ‘nothingism,’ a study in ‘nothingness,’ and nihilists are ‘nothingists.’ Typically, ‘ism’ terms, such as nationalism or liberalism, refer to a substantive movement or school of thought, yet as also appears to be the case with existentialism, nihilism is a pure negation and has no fixed content. This has led some scholars to conclude, most notably Helmut Thielicke, that such ideological ‘isms’ cannot possess enduring life, nor are they capable of providing a complete truth universally valid for all human beings. Thielicke maintains that ideologies and creeds have themselves been reduced to nihil, supported in the momentous phrase: ‘[...] der letzte “-Ismus” [ist] notwendig der Nihilismus’.⁷⁴

The term nihilism was allegedly first used by F. L. Goetzius in *De nonismo et nihilismo in theologia* of 1733, but the work was little known, and probably did not impact upon the subsequent development of the notion. The term then reappeared in the late eighteenth century in theosophist Jacob Hermann Obereit’s 1787 work *Der wiederkommende Lebensgeist der verzweifelten Metaphysik*, and also in the works of Daniel Jenisch, who in 1796 defined transcendental idealism as nihilism in his *Über Grund und Werth der Entdeckungen des Herrn Professor Kant in der Metaphysik, Moral und Aesthetik*. In this work he used nihilism to describe the work of the extreme Kantians who preach that the things-in-themselves are nothing for our cognition. It must be noted, however, that whilst Jenisch employed the term, he never fully developed the concept of nihilism. Similarly, Obereit used the concept of nihilism to denote the apparent subjectivist consequences of Kant’s epistemology, but his use of the term remains somewhat vague and unsystematic. Nihilism was used for the first time in its more modern sense by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, as mentioned above, who borrowed and subsequently coined the term to express what

⁷⁴ Helmut Thielicke, *Der Nihilismus: Entstehung, Wesen, Überwindung* (Tübingen: Reichl, 1951), p. 24.

he viewed as the unfortunate consequences of the prevalent philosophical school of transcendental idealism. Jacobi famously used the word in a published letter to Fichte in 1799: ‘Wahrlich, mein lieber Fichte, es soll mich nicht verdrießen, wenn Sie, oder wer es sey, Chimärismus nennen wollen, was ich dem Idealismus, den ich Nihilismus schelte, entgegensetze [...]’⁷⁵ Raised as a pietist, Jacobi was a notable theistic critic of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, affirming that man must ultimately rely on feeling and a belief in God. In 1780 he had been the main antagonist in the Pantheism Controversy, when he defined the Spinozism of thinkers such as Lessing and Mendelssohn as atheism. The 1799 letter to Fichte ignited the so-called Atheism Controversy, a controversy that ultimately cost Fichte his professorship at the University of Jena. In this short letter, Jacobi condemned the inherent tendency of transcendental idealism to dissolve not just the reality of the external world, but also the notion of God into the ‘nothingness’ of consciousness by focusing on the subjective conditions for the possibility of knowledge. Idealism hence culminates, according to Jacobi, in mere ‘chimerism or nihilism.’ To his mind, this objection revealed the fundamental flaws of idealism. It would seem that, for Jacobi, ‘nihilism was a term of reproach, a slur of sufficient proportions that it almost functioned as an argument *reductio ad absurdum*. If one could show that nihilism was the consequence of a particular position, then that position was obviously invalid’.⁷⁶ Jacobi was convinced that Fichte recognised no truths beyond those of consciousness or reason and thus fell into an absolute subjectivism which attributed everything to man and left no room for God – indeed, which rendered God a figment of the human imagination. Jacobi believed that man has the following choice:

[D]as *Nichts* oder einen *Gott*. Das Nichts erwählend macht er sich zu Gott; das heißt: er macht zu Gott ein *Gespens*; denn es ist unmöglich, wenn kein Gott ist, daß nicht der Mensch und alles was ihn umgiebt bloß *Gespens* sey. Ich wiederhole: Gott ist, und *außer* mir, ein *lebendiges, für sich bestehendes Wesen*, oder ICH bin Gott. Es giebt kein drittes.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi to Fichte, in: *GA* III, 3, p. 239.

⁷⁶ Karen Leslie Carr, *The Banalization of Nihilism: Twentieth-Century Responses to Meaninglessness* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 14.

⁷⁷ Klaus Hammacher, ‘Jacobis Brief an Fichte’, in *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation*, vol. 2.1 of *Philosoph-literarische Streitsachen* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1993), p. 220.

Important to consider here is that although Jacobi appears to rebuke and rebuff Fichtean idealism in his *Brief an Fichte*, it is imperative to view his critique as part of a wider denunciation of the inherent nihilism of transcendental idealism. The question as to the precise date Jacobi first used the term ‘nihilism’ remains an area of scholarly contention, but, significantly enough, the disputants are unified in their views on its extension and applicability. According to Günter Zöller:

For Jacobi, the transcendental idealism introduced by Kant and radicalized by Fichte dissolves reality into a mere figment of the mind. Rather than combatting scepticism, Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre* is seen as supporting doubt in everyday reality by replacing the realist worldview of ordinary consciousness with the idealist production of a world that is nothing but appearances and hence appearances of nothing. In his earlier critique of Kant, Jacobi had already coined the term ‘nihilism,’ which he reuses in the letter to Fichte to brandish the metaphysical and moral implications of transcendental idealism.⁷⁸

The question of whether Kant or Fichte is the original inspiration for Jacobi’s critique is, for the moment, extraneous; what can be gleaned from his *Brief an Fichte* is the true origin and target of his objection, namely ‘philosophy (or rather *philosophies*) that conceive the subject and its representations as the *fons et origo* of the world, that is, what Foucault calls “empirico-transcendental reduplication”’.⁷⁹ Jacobi views Kant’s philosophy, especially as it is consistently and systematically developed by Fichte, as the paradigm of all philosophy – and hence as the very epitome of nihilism. Jacobi’s denunciation of idealist philosophy is first and foremost an attack on Kant and Fichte, whom Jacobi sees as nothing more than a radical Kantian. In Jacobi’s view, Kant is the first thinker to discover the principle of all knowledge, or what Jacobi refers to as the ‘principle of subject-object identity.’ It implies that the self knows only the products of its own activity, and

⁷⁸ Günter Zöller, *Fichte’s Transcendental Philosophy: The Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 21.

⁷⁹ Justin Clemens, *The Romanticism of Contemporary Theory: Institutions, Aesthetics, Nihilism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 75.

makes self-knowledge into the paradigm of all knowledge. Jacobi's term thus refers to that self-knowledge where the subject makes the object into the mirror of its own activity. Jacobi's chief objection to Kant, or Kantian inspired philosophies, is that this principle results in nihilism. If it is universalized, like Fichte would have intended, such that knowledge through reason is made into the paradigm of all knowledge, then it leads directly to 'speculative egoism,' that is, a solipsism that dissolves all reality into man's own representations, as it does in Fichte's system. This solipsism is a direct consequence of Kant's principle, Jacobi affirms, because it suggests that all we know is our own representations, the products of our intellectual activity. We do not know any reality that exists apart from and prior to this activity, something that is not created by it, whether that be nature, others minds, God, or the very self that is the source of this activity. Hence man is caught inside the circle of his or her own consciousness, a circle consisting of nothing but representations which represent nothing. It was the sad fate of Fichte, Jacobi claims, to expand upon Kant's philosophy in just this direction. As Frederick Beiser affirms, 'Fichte rid Kant's philosophy of the thing-in-itself; but in doing so he revealed its true tendency and inner spirit: nihilism'.⁸⁰

Since then, the term nihilism has also come to describe a philosophical phenomenon that began in the second half of the nineteenth century and was during that time given its guiding definition by the likes of Ivan Turgenev and Friedrich Nietzsche. Russian novelist Turgenev is believed to have popularised the term in his 1862 novel, *Fathers and Sons* (*Ottsy i deti*), in which the character Bazarov displays a nihilistic ideology. He dismisses conformist values, principles, and all forms of conventional wisdom and is fanatically dedicated to the cause of social justice. As such, Turgenev can be seen to project a distinctly Russian form of nihilism, which is 'transformed into a clear-eyed, unromantic, and action-oriented form of protest against the old and decaying forms of Russian political and social convention'.⁸¹ Nietzsche is of course the philosopher most prominently associated with nihilism, and one who similarly regards nihilism as an opportunity for a total transvaluation of

⁸⁰ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 124.

⁸¹ John Marmysz, *Laughing at Nothing: Humor as a Response to Nihilism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), p. 17.

values ('Unterwertung aller Werte'). Nietzsche, however, is concerned with turning the calamity of the so-called 'Tod Gottes'⁸² into a prelude to the rebirth of the humanly divine and to mankind's elevation and self-overcoming. In Nietzsche's nihilistic vision, there is no objective order or structure in the world except what we give it. He thus concludes that values are baseless and that reason is everything: 'jeder Glaube, jedes Für-wahr-halten [ist] nothwendig falsch: weil es eine wahre Welt gar nicht giebt'.⁸³ Nietzsche believes that nihilism will expose all cherished beliefs and sacrosanct truths as symptoms of a defective Western mythos, and this collapse of meaning, relevance, and purpose will be the most destructive force in history, constituting a total assault on reality and producing nothing less than the greatest crisis of humanity:

Was ich erzähle, ist die Geschichte der nächsten zwei Jahrhunderte. Ich beschreibe, was kommt, was nicht mehr anders kommen kann: Die Heraufkunft des Nihilismus. Diese Geschichte kann jetzt schon erzählt werden: denn die Notwendigkeit selbst ist hier am Werke. Diese Zukunft redet schon in hundert Zeichen, dieses Schicksal kündigt überall sich an; für diese Musik der Zukunft sind alle Ohren bereits gespitzt. Unsere ganze europäische Kultur bewegt sich seit langem schon mit einer Tortur der Spannung, die von Jahrzehnt zu Jahrzehnt wächst, wie auf eine Katastrophe los: unruhig, gewaltsam, überstürzt: wie ein Strom, der *ans* Ende will, der sich nicht mehr besinnt, der Furcht davor hat, sich zu besinnen.⁸⁴

Nihilism also dominated in the first half of the twentieth century, driving and informing not just German thought during the inter-war years, but also French and German existentialism in the aftermath of the Second World War. Michael Novak alludes to the weight and primacy of this philosophical movement, stating '[...] the dark underground river of the twentieth century [had] not been fascism nor communism but their presupposition: nihilism.' For example, these nihilistic

⁸² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, pp. 120-121.

⁸³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe VIII/2*, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe VIII/2*, ed. Giorgio Colli & Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967), p. 18.

⁸⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Wille zur Macht, III*. This citation forms part of the preface which Peter Gast took from one of Nietzsche's notebooks from November 1887 to March 1888. The text was entitled *Vorrede* (Friedrich Nietzsche, vol. 13, *Nachlaß 1887-1889 Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli & Mazzino Montinari (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999) p. 189).

experiences of devastation and war can be seen in the works of D. H. Lawrence, Arno Schmidt, Paul Celan, and modernist Japanese writer Riichi Yokomitsu. Celan's nihilistic tone is visible in his depiction of the corrosive nature of the death camps in his *Todesfuge* (1945), as well as in his later work, most notably *Die Niemandsrose* of 1963. Schmidt's writing is recognized for its cosmic, mythological and experimental treatment of war. His momentous text *Leviathan* (1949) depicts the doomed attempt to escape a bombing raid in a commandeered train, and exposes the plight of humanity as a plaything.

The above discussion on nihilism allows us to reach two overarching conclusions about existentialism. Firstly, the intrinsic atheism of nihilism succeeds in underscoring the essential diversity and disparity of theological positions that continue to occupy the existentialist realm. As was first seen in Kantian and post-Kantian idealist thinking, the nature of God remains intrinsic and complex in philosophical discussions over the self and human freedom. It has generated controversy and disagreement, with self-proclaimed theists like Kant being branded as atheists for offering a practical approach to Christian doctrine. Similarly in twentieth-century existentialism, thinkers remain divided in their theological standpoints. Heidegger, for instance, can be viewed as a 'methodological atheist'. His philosophical thinking is neither for nor against the affirmation of God, but is rather 'a-theistic' in the sense of being 'without God.' What is at issue for Heidegger regarding questions of human freedom is not a question of God *or being*, but rather an interpretation of God from the question of being. Conversely, existentialist theologians like Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich attempt to understand God in relation to a particular situation concerning the concretely existing human individual. Their interpretation of human existence is one that emphasizes the freedom of individuals to dictate their own identities through choices, and the paradoxical, ambiguous or even absurd nature of the reality that humans encounter. They similarly view religious faith as being closely related to feelings of despair and isolation, and suggest that faith can grow out of such emotions, or can provide the tools to overcome them.

What can also be seen following the above discussion is how twentieth-century existentialist thinking evinces a clear sense of 'engagement' with aesthetic and

nihilistic themes, and serves to respond to them. Whilst Sartre is treated as an existentialist in this thesis, his atheistic existentialist ethics could arguably be seen to hover on the edges of nihilism. For instance, his 1945 play *Huis Clos*, in which he depicts the annoyances of other people as hell, Sartre readily expresses the nihilism of subjectivity in the form of selfish absurdity and meaninglessness. Marie-Luise Raters also observes: ‘Wie Nietzsche, so ist auch Sartre Nihilist. Für ihn gibt es keine Vollendung des menschlichen Lebens im Jenseits und keine Werte. Der Mensch muss selbst setzen, was gut und böse ist. Zu dieser Freiheit ist er quasi “verdammt”’.⁸⁵ The problem with this assessment is its flippant pigeonholing of Sartre as a man advocating despair in the face of a harsh and meaningless universe. Whilst Sartre certainly explores and engages with this attitude, he ultimately does not take the position of a nihilist. Sartre defines nihilism as ‘bad faith’ (*la mauvaise foi*), which signifies a ‘giving up’ on existence. Bad faith consists in the false belief that man is his or her own nothingness, in the manner of being a nothingness-in-itself. As Sartre outlines in the footnotes in *Being and Nothingness*, one can escape bad faith only through a self-recovery of being in authenticity.⁸⁶ In other words, the individual aims at substantiality by continually founding himself upon the affirmation and assertion of his or her own freedom. Sartre’s philosophy can thus be viewed as one that distinguishes between authenticity and inauthenticity, genuine freedom and *mauvaise foi*, and ultimately, existentialism and nihilism. Fundamentally, theistic and atheistic existentialism offer a response to nihilism and its godlessness, for what can be located in twentieth-century existentialist literature is an oscillation between the antitheses of despair and uncertainty, on the one hand, and, most significantly, hope and expectation on the other. It is precisely this possibility for optimism, liberation, authenticity, truth, and self-determination that affirms how existentialism functions as a response to nihilism; it is an attempt to find a way out of the godless void.

GRENZSITUATION

⁸⁵ Marie-Luise Raters, ‘Atheismus’, in *Religionen und Weltanschauungen: Werte, Normen, Fragen in Judentum, Christentum, Islam, Hinduismus/Buddhismus, Esoterik und Atheismus*, vol. 6, ed. Karl Grözinger (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschaftsverlag, 2009), p. 42.

⁸⁶ Sartre, *Being*, p. 116.

The notion of *Grenzsituation* was coined by German psychiatrist, philosopher, and major exponent of existentialism in Germany, Karl Jaspers (1883-1969). The term has been translated in several different ways, including ‘boundary situation’, ‘ultimate situation’, ‘limit situation,’ or, as Paul Goodman applied it in Gestalt Therapy, the ‘extreme situation’.⁸⁷ Jasper’s *Grenzsituation* denotes a central concept within his *Existenzherstellung*, as delineated in the major philosophical tomes *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (1919) and *Existenzphilosophie* (1938),⁸⁸ and describes the inescapable truths in relation to which alone human life can be made truly meaningful.

It is a psychological truth about mankind, affirmed Jaspers, that the *conditio humana* is fundamentally insufferable; ‘[...] diese gesamte Überlieferung gibt keine Geborgenheit, aber auch keine absolute Verlässigkeit’.⁸⁹ The individual is driven by the need for unquestionable absolutes to fully comprehend his own reality, and achieves a sense of security in ‘fundamental principles, dogmas, matters susceptible of proof, traditional dispositions, [...], or rules that exhibit a formalistic and *rational* form’.⁹⁰ Yet in some instances the individual is forced to acknowledge the inherently *irrational* and incongruous nature of reality, which seizes him from the security of his indubitable convictions. As Jaspers outlines in *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, it is these challenging instances that remind human beings, ‘daß [...] nichts Festes da ist, kein unbezweifelbares Absolutes, kein Halt, der jeder Erfahrung und jedem Denken standhielte’.⁹¹ In such *Grenzsituationen*, which typically refer to bereavement, guilt, anguish, or poverty, ‘der Mensch [wird] an die Grenze seines Daseins geführt’.⁹² He experiences intense pain and sorrow, and is forced to grapple with the unavoidable perplexities and contradictions embedded in

⁸⁷ Goodman employed the term without direct attribution to Jaspers due to the fact that the ‘Grenzsituation’ concept had already been ‘felt’ by intellectuals in the late 1940s. Cf. Paul Goodman, Ralph Hefferline & Frederick Perls, *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* (New York: Julian Press, 1951), p. 324.

⁸⁸ Cf. Karl Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (Heidelberg: Julius Springer, 1945), and Karl Jaspers, *Existenzphilosophie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1938).

⁸⁹ Karl Jaspers, *Einführung in die Philosophie* (Munich: Piper, 1971), p. 19.

⁹⁰ Peter E. Gordon, ‘German Existentialism and the Persistence of Metaphysics: Weber, Jaspers, Heidegger’, in *Situating Existentialism: Key Texts in Context*, ed. Jonathan Judaken and Robert Bernasconi (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 65-88, p. 70.

⁹¹ Jaspers, *Psychologie*, p. 202.

⁹² Bollnow, *Existenzphilosophie*, p. 57.

his own reality; the co-existence of good and evil, beauty and ugliness, the positive and negative, the infinite and the finite, the whole and the incomplete. Bollnow offers a metaphorical explanation of this concept, referring to it as ‘der “Pfahl im Fleisch,” durch den dem Menschen die Unvollkommenheit seines Daseins eindringlich vor Augen geführt wird’.⁹³

The notion’s overarching insight is that it is only through true *scheitern*, or foundering, that man can become a fulfilled cipher of Being. As Jasper affirms in his critical work from 1932, *Philosophie*, ‘Dies echte Scheitern allein, dem ich rückhaltlos wissend und übernehmend offen bin, kann erfüllte Chiffre des Seins werden’.⁹⁴ Furthermore, it is only through this intensity of anguish and contradiction that the individual can comprehend the possibility of a superior existence beyond all human knowledge and limits. This is what Jaspers called ‘transcendence,’ and what he defines as the crossing of a boundary and the realisation of a new condition of self-conscious authenticity. Through transcendence, man becomes aware of the absolute and of the infinite and insentiently rejects the finitude of his existence.

Exploring the Jasperian notions of *Grenzsituation* and transcendence is of indisputable relevance and interest within an existentialist context. Yet it remains particularly pertinent for the purposes of this overarching discussion to reflect on how transcendence following a *Grenzsituation* might be physically experienced within the individual’s own empirical realm, or articulated in fiction. Of particular significance here is the question of Jasper’s own religious faith. Like Sartre and Heidegger, Jaspers can be seen as an atheistic existentialist who openly rejected Christian faith. Yet unlike other existential philosophers, he ‘still offered a point of contact for “conversing” with the Christian religion’.⁹⁵ In *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, Jaspers affirmed that he did not accept Christian faith grounded in an objective revelation of God, and maintained that transcendence manifests itself exclusively through ciphers,⁹⁶ otherwise understood

⁹³ *Der Pfahl im Fleisch* (originally *La mort dans l’âme*) is incidentally the title of the third novel included in Sartre’s novel series *The Roads to Freedom* (*Les chemins de la liberté*). First published in 1949 in France, it appeared some years later in Germany in 1963.

⁹⁴ Karl Jaspers, *Philosophie*, vol. 3: *Metaphysik* (Berlin: Julius Springer 1932), p. 225.

⁹⁵ Gerrit Cornelius Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: General Revelation* (Grand Rapids, M.I.: Eerdmans, 1955), p. 218.

⁹⁶ Cf. Karl Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung* (Munich: Piper, 1962).

as a secret, symbolic writing. In opposition to religious faith, Jaspers' concept of transcendence exemplifies a philosophical faith that is 'not bound to rituals, priests and demonstrations of a revealed God,' but is rather 'an optimistic credo and confidence in freedom, humanity, and transcendence that favours an attitude of [...] confidence that human life is worth living'.⁹⁷ Thus, it is entirely unconnected to the biblical idea of revelation or the deification of human individuals. Leszek Kolakowski similarly explores the matter of Jasperian transcendence in correlation to religious faith and concludes that it offers 'no universally accessible God and consequently no salvation'.⁹⁸ Within Jasper's concept of transcendence, man is and remains in *Grenzsituationen* in which he gains awareness of his transcendence and is able to thrust his way forwards towards actualised existence.

ANGST

The fifth and final theme to be discussed here as part of this existentialist manifesto is that of anxiety, or 'angst'. Angst is a distinctively if not uniquely modern category, and is known as a consequence of an encounter with the 'Nothing.' It nonetheless purports to call forth a universal human condition, upon which Kierkegaard and Heidegger have been the deepest thinkers. The prevailing idea here is that human existence is in some way 'on its own.' To offer a brief etymological explanation of the term in its various contexts, 'angst' can mean in German both 'fear' and 'anxiety'. In English, the term is used to refer to intense anxiety or distress. In both psychology and existential philosophy, however, fear and anxiety are distinguished. Fear tends to be focused on a particular object or situation and can be reduced or even eliminated. Anxiety, on the other hand, is usually more general and diffuse and is harder to reduce. As such, angst, in a specifically existentialist realm, is much closer in meaning to anxiety than to fear. Angst can be understood as a type of *feeling* that seizes the individual as he or she is confronted with a certain possibility, that is, as one's 'psychical sensitivity projects a vague image or adumbration which acquires the quality of being "possible," of being

⁹⁷ Karl Jaspers in *Dictionary of Existentialism*, ed. Haim Gordon (West Port, C.T.: Greenwood Press, 1999), pp. 245-247, p. 245.

⁹⁸ Cf. Leszek Kolakowski, 'Philosophical Faith in the Face of Revelation', in *Modernity on Endless Trial* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 108-119, p. 119.

capable of (or even demanding) enactment in one's finitude'.⁹⁹ Kierkegaard was one of the notable philosophers to describe this state of extreme despair and uncertainty in people caused by their state of freedom to choose in *The Origins of Dread*, published in 1844 under the pseudonym Vigilius Haufniensis. The mere fact that Kierkegaard, or Haufniensis, attributes such great importance to angst, so great that he makes it the subject of a whole treatise, is in itself quite extraordinary. It would appear that angst, or anxiety were uncommon phenomena in nineteenth-century psychology.¹⁰⁰ It is certainly not uncommon for the reflective modern view, but this is due not least to Kierkegaard-Haufniensis's analysis of angst which has left profound traces in the literature, philosophy, and psychology of the twentieth century. There are many indications that we live in an age of anxiety, and these indications are supported by the fact that angst became a dominant theme in twentieth-century literary and philosophy. Since the literature and philosophy of an epoch also interprets the present, our time seems to be characterised by an intense experience of angst. If one extracts from the fact that this modern self-consciousness might be blinding us to the anxiety of a previous age, then anxiety must be linked to 'modern' experiences of emptiness and loss of meaning, until one reaches the point where nothing has meaning.

Kierkegaard-Haufniensis described angst as 'an alien power which grasps' the individual. As such, the simple 'peace and repose' of innocence is permeated by angst, as when a nightmare appears and disrupts undifferentiated sleep. But what is particularly intriguing about Kierkegaard-Haufniensis's usage of this philosophical concept is how it designates the simultaneity of two opposing feelings or emotions, which he explains as a 'sympathetic-antipathy' and an 'antipathetic sympathy.' On the one hand, one experiences in angst feelings of alarm, fright, repulsion, and the desire to flee from the object of anxiety; on the other hand and at the same time, one can feel allured, enticed, and tempted, as well as desirous to seek this so-called object.¹⁰¹ This prompts one to consider further the nature of a psychological state

⁹⁹ Arnold B. Come, *Kierkegaard as Humanist*, p. 50.

¹⁰⁰ Kierkegaard observes that 'the concept of anxiety is almost never treated in psychology.' See: Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, trans. Reidar Thomte (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 42.

¹⁰¹ Kierkegaard, *Concept*, *ibid.*

that evokes the ambiguity of feeling both temptation and dread. Unsurprisingly, this feeling is not triggered by such possibilities as deciding to wear a navy suit instead of a grey suit, or as going out to a restaurant one evening instead of preparing dinner at home. Arnold Come expands on the complexities of this notion by describing the angst that may be felt by a child who is about to enter the ‘haunted house’ at a theme park, or by an adult who is deciding what kind of career to pursue, or whether to marry a particular person.¹⁰² But as Come continues, none of these depict the decisive, qualitative angst which, as Kierkegaard-Haufniensis asserts, affects every human being, beginning at the moment of abandoning innocence and throughout the rest of his or her life. For Kierkegaard-Haufniensis, the particular instance that brings about existential angst appears when ‘[d]reaming, the spirit projects its own actuality,’ that is to say, when finitude and infinitude interact causing one’s innocence to be disturbed by a shape ‘outside itself,’ a *positive* unification of the two, a unification which appears as a ‘third,’ a third something that differs from either of the other two. This is what Kierkegaard-Haufniensis refers to as the ‘spirit’ or ‘self.’ He summarises this in the following quotation.

The human being is a synthesis of the psychical and the sensuous. But a synthesis is unthinkable if the two are not united in a third. This third is a spirit. [...] The spirit is present, but as immediate, as dreaming. Inasmuch as it is now present, it is in a sense a hostile power, because it constantly disturbs the relation between soul and body. [...] On the other hand, it is a friendly power, which precisely wants to constitute the relation. What, then, is the human being’s relation to this ambiguous power; how does the spirit relate to itself and to its condition? It relates as angst. Get rid of itself, the spirit cannot; neither can it grasp itself as long as it has itself outside of itself; nor can the human being sink down into the vegetative, because he is qualified as spirit; one cannot flee from angst, because one loves it; yet one cannot really love it, because one flees from it. Innocence has now reached its uttermost point.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Come, *Kierkegaard*, p. 50.

¹⁰³ Kierkegaard, *Concept*, pp. 38-40.

Much as biologists have shown avid curiosity in this application by inducing frantically undirected behaviour in animals by removing their natural structures of reference, angst can be viewed as the humanly equivalent state in which the world *as such* presents itself no longer as home. Kierkegaard formulates this notion in a metaphor. ‘Anxiety can be compared with dizziness. The person whose eye happens to look down into the yawning abyss becomes dizzy’.¹⁰⁴ This state of dizziness is said to be freedom. That is to say that the individual suddenly uncovers the possibility for self-relating, but also that one must be accountable for the way he or she relates. It is, however, important how we discover this possibility. It is found in angst by already relating to the possibility. That which angst manifests is thus that we cannot escape ourselves as somebody who relates even if we try. Angst is not only discovering the possibility of freedom; angst also becomes the anxiety for this possibility. And in this anxiety or the dizziness of freedom, ‘freedom succumbs’.¹⁰⁵

Heidegger offers a dissimilar view of angst. His problematic engagement with Kierkegaard is also not without relevance here. Generally speaking, Heidegger shows little appreciation for the Kierkegaardian school of thought, whereby ‘a brief pattern of acknowledgement’ is often quickly followed ‘by critical distancing in almost all [...] remarks about Kierkegaard’.¹⁰⁶ And yet many critics and scholars of Heidegger remain steadfast in the belief that he learned much from Kierkegaard, far more than he was perhaps prepared to admit. As McCarthy contends, *Sein und Zeit* has the stamp of Kierkegaard all over it’.¹⁰⁷ John Caputo serves as a prime example of a philosophical scholar to criticise Heidegger’s distant stance towards Kierkegaard; he observes:

Heidegger not only understates his dependence on Kierkegaard, he misstates it. In borrowing upon Kierkegaard’s theory of repetition – without acknowledgement – he invokes Kierkegaard at the most crucial ontological juncture in the published text of *Being and Time*. And when he does mention

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Vincent McCarthy, ‘Martin Heidegger: Kierkegaard’s Influence Hidden and in Full View,’ in *Kierkegaard and Existentialism* (Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources, 9), ed. Jon Stewart (Farnham/Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 95-126, p. 96.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Kierkegaard, it is always to dress him down as an *ontico-existentiell* author [...] It is clear that Kierkegaard's contribution to *Being and Time* goes right to the heart of the ontology which is defended there. Heidegger differs from Kierkegaard, not as an ontological thinker from an ontic, as he likes to make out, but principally in terms of the degree to which Heidegger has formalized and articulated Kierkegaard's ontology in a more systematic, professional manner.¹⁰⁸

Caputo is highlighting what many informed readers interpret as being Heidegger's minimisation of Kierkegaard's influence on *Sein und Zeit* and other works.

Heidegger's lectures that were delivered before and after the publication of *Sein und Zeit* reveal some passing references to Kierkegaard, but this brevity is nevertheless indicative of his substantial preoccupation with Kierkegaardian material. In reference to Heidegger's engagement with the theme of existential temporality found in the second volume of Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, Dan Magurshak is similarly prepared to entertain the hypothesis that 'Heidegger, deeply influenced by [Kierkegaard], made this work his own to such an extent that he failed to realize how much his own existential reflections relied upon Kierkegaard's writings'.¹⁰⁹ Magurshak also underlines the borrowings and influence of Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death* that are traceable in *Sein und Zeit*, and reproaches Heidegger for failing to appropriately acknowledge Kierkegaard. He maintains that Heidegger 'focus[es] upon shortcomings rather than accomplishments,' and notes how the rare 'praise bestowed upon Kierkegaard is almost damning in its faintheartedness'.¹¹⁰

Before reflecting more closely on the areas of agreement and disagreement in Kierkegaardian and Heideggerian angst, it is pertinent to outline the fundamental details of the latter's philosophical position. Heidegger defines angst as a basic disposition or 'mood'. In a crucial passage in part two of *Was ist Metaphysik?* Heidegger explains how there is a basic requirement, or 'Grunderfordernis,' for the

¹⁰⁸ John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 82-83.

¹⁰⁹ Dan Magurshak, 'Despair and Everydayness: Kierkegaard's Corrective Contribution to Heidegger's Notion of Fallen Everydayness', in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: The Sickness unto Death*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), pp. 207-237, p. 210.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

possible development of the question of nothingness, namely that the ‘Nichts’ must be *given* beforehand, and that we must be able to *encounter* it.¹¹¹ This ‘Nothing’ is experienced in the fundamental mood, or ‘Grundstimmung,’ of angst. As is delineated in *Sein und Zeit*, what the individual experiences in angst is that the meaningful world, in which ‘Dasein’ goes about its every day life, fades away into insignificance. Human life is devoid of meaning, and one might experience uncanny feelings of not-being-at-home and of being thrown. This is why, as Kierkegaard explains in his own clear distinction, angst is not to be understood as a fear of a particular object or entity in the world. No specific ‘thing’ is the cause of angst, and, in this way, it reveals no-thing or nothing.¹¹² Taking this notion that in angst all particular things lose meaning, Herman Philipse observes how this should undermine what Heidegger refers to as ‘Verfallen’ – the idea that mankind flees from his or her self into worldly occupations – which brings us back to ourselves as contingent and fixed beings in the world. As Philipse explains, ‘Nichts’ in the Heideggerian sense refers to a positive phenomenon, the phenomenon that everything becomes insignificant in angst.¹¹³ Furthermore, Heidegger maintains that experiencing ‘das Nichts’ is a prerequisite to thematically experiencing being (‘Sein’), in the sense of being-in-the-world as such. This is why, according to *Was ist Metaphysik?*, the ‘Nichts’ and ‘Dasein’ belong together.

Heidegger also examines the concept of angst in relation to death. In this instance, angst alludes to ceasing to be-in-the-world of ‘Dasein,’ and thus is to be differentiated from the type of angst that concerns being-in-the-world. Heidegger asserts that it is in the fundamental nature of Being, as a groundless and contingent state, to come to an end. To await or anticipate death in one’s thinking, to give oneself up is, in this sense, a supreme achievement, in that it brings ‘Dasein’ to its

¹¹¹ Martin Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik?*, 10th Edition (Frankfurt a/M: Klostermann, 1969), p. 29; cf. ‘Wenn wir uns aber durch die formale Unmöglichkeit der Frage nach dem Nichts nicht beirren lassen und ihr entgegen die Frage dennoch stellen, dann müssen wir zum mindesten dem genügen, was als Grunderfordernis für die mögliche Durchführung jeder Frage bestehen bleibt. Wenn das Nichts, wie immer, befragt werden soll – es selbst – dann muss es zuvor gegeben sein. Wir müssen ihm begegnen können.’

¹¹² Tugendhat notes a violation of logical grammar here. Given that angst is not concerned with specific things or objects, it seems somewhat problematic for it to be concerned with the substantive ‘das Nichts.’ Tugendhat observes that Heidegger might have selected a different term. Cf. Ernst Tugendhat, *Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Husserl und Heidegger* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970), p. 155.

¹¹³ Herman Philipse, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 14.

most extreme possibility.¹¹⁴ This analysis makes angst about being present, as well as ceasing to be present. Angst about the possibility of not being is also angst about being, in the sense that the anticipation of non-being in the form of death is a unique expression of ‘Dasein.’ This is essentially the ‘tour-de-force by which Heidegger transforms anxiety from something negative, an expression of fear, unacceptance, and evasion, into something positive, into acceptance of one’s uniqueness’.¹¹⁵

Whilst Heidegger’s engagement with Kierkegaardian philosophy is critical in parts, his concept of angst and anxiety does, nevertheless, reveal some notable parallels to those of his Danish predecessor. For instance, Heidegger fully shares the perception of eeriness in the self-alienated individual, as well as the conflict that derives from desiring to change one’s condition, and wanting the condition to continue.

Heidegger similarly identifies with how Kierkegaard attributes the appearance of angst to a deeper, more complex human nature. Kierkegaard links angst with the problem of melancholy and inclosing reserve, and although Heidegger does not explicitly use these terms, his discussion of ‘Entfremdung’ as closing off ‘Being’ or ‘Dasein’ from authenticity and possibility echoes Kierkegaard’s use of inclosing reserve. Regardless of their precise provenance the terms angst, melancholy, *Entfremdung* and (in)authenticity all have great import for the development of existentialist thought in and after the 1920s, when Heidegger was writing *Sein and Zeit*.

* * *

The aim of the following study will be to offer an extensive exploration not just of angst but also of those other aforementioned themes that together constitute what I am calling the unwritten existentialist manifesto, namely *das Ich*, freedom and responsibility, authenticity, *Grenzsituation*, angst and suffering. Chapters Two to

¹¹⁴ ‘[In der Angst] befindet sich das Dasein vor dem Nichts der möglichen Unmöglichkeit seiner Existenz. Die Angst [...] erschließt so die äußerste Möglichkeit. Weil das Vorlaufen das Dasein schlechthin vereinzelt [...], gehört zu diesem Sichverstehen des Daseins aus seinem Grunde die Grundbefindlichkeit der Angst. Das Sein zum Tode ist wesenhaft Angst.’ See Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 12th edition (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1972), pp. 265-266.

¹¹⁵ Adrian Tomer and Grafton T. Eliason, ‘Existentialism and Death Attitudes,’ in *Existential and Spiritual Issues in Death Attitudes*, ed. Adrian Tomer, Grafton T. Eliason, & Paul T. P. Wong (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2007), pp. 7-38 (p. 14).

Four will include discussions of the atheistic existentialist writing of Max Frisch and Alfred Andersch and the theistic existentialist works of Heinrich Böll. But my focus will not be philosophy or theology but rather twentieth-century literature, more specifically post-1945 German language literature. I will seek in the subsequent chapters to document how these existentialist themes and concerns ‘infiltrated’ postwar novels written in German, illustrating how the cataclysmic events of the mid-twentieth century – the Second World War, the Holocaust, the widespread destruction and upheaval caused by the Nazi regime – made writers particularly susceptible to existentialist thought. Each of these writers’ works exhibits strands and strains of existentialist thinking, even where these authors might not be considered full-fledged existentialists per se. It is these strands and strains that my dissertation seeks to uncover, in the process showing how existentialist thought gradually filtered down into societal awareness in the aftermath of the Second World War.

‘Man will sich selbst ein Fremder sein. Nicht in der Rolle, wohl aber in der unbewussten Entscheidung, welche Art von Rolle ich mir zuschreibe, liegt meine Wirklichkeit.’

- Max Frisch, *Stiller*

In the year 1961 Max Frisch gave an interview with Horst Bienek, in which he proclaimed: ‘Bei jeder neuen Arbeit hatte ich das naive Gefühl, dass ich jetzt, Gott sei Dank, ein radikal anderes Thema angehe, um früher oder später festzustellen, dass alles, was nicht radikal misslingt, das radikal gleiche Thema hat’.¹ It is among the aims of this chapter to probe the truth behind Frisch’s dry remark within the thematic framework of his 1954 novel *Stiller*. The characteristic note of irony in this comment, however, should warn readers from hastily pigeonholing Frisch as a one-dimensional novelist of limited scope. Far from contending that Frisch’s literary repertoire is simplistic or repetitive, this chapter aims to demonstrate how, through his works’ exploration of the cornerstones of existentialist thought, namely identity, individual freedom, self-realisation and angst, they possess a remarkable thematic unity. It is precisely through this unity in multiplicity that Frisch has been able to produce a range of novels and plays which have come to constitute a major contribution to post-1945 European fiction.

THE TRILOGY: *STILLER*, *HOMO FABER* UND *MEIN NAME SEI GANTENBEIN*

As has already been established in the introductory chapter, a key concern of twentieth-century German language writing has been the existentialist concern that man has lost his vital centre.² Michael Butler observes how innumerable German-

¹ Horst Bienek, ‘Max Frisch’, in *Werkstattgespräche mit Schriftstellern* (Munich: Hanser, 1962), pp. 21-32.

² Michael Butler, *The Novels of Max Frisch* (London: Wolff, 1976), p. 9

language writers have ‘struggled with the problems produced by the collapse not just of traditional values but also of the self, the human personality, which this loss of centrality has induced’.³ Thomas Mann, Bertolt Brecht, Hermann Hesse, Franz Kafka, Alfred Andersch, Arno Schmidt, Günter Grass and Heinrich Böll constitute a handful of the many twentieth- and twenty-first-century authors who have sought in their divergent ways to cast light on an ostensibly increasing degeneration of human individuality and who have wrestled with the complexities of depicting man in fiction that this involves. As Frisch wryly alludes to in the above citation (‘um früher oder später festzustellen, dass alles [...] das radikal gleiche Thema hat’), it is precisely this existentialist theme of man’s positioning and ‘centricity’ within society that remains a consistent feature of his literary repertoire. In this way, Frisch’s three major texts *Stiller* (1954), *Homo Faber* (1957) and *Mein Name sei Gantenbein* (1964) can be read as a trilogy connected by the motif of their characters’ struggles with the immutability of their individual biographies.

The characters in Frisch’s novels are entrenched – with the exception of the protagonist in his first novel, *Jürg Reinhart* (1937) – in the clearly defined context of a modern, conventionalist bourgeois society that is depicted as being deeply flawed. This society requires the compliance and conformity of its members who have designated roles they are expected to perform. It is a society shown to be indifferent, if not adverse, to the development and preservation of personal integrity. Before we examine the existentialist notions of identity, authenticity, ‘centricity’ and dislocation in *Stiller*, which forms the main analytic focus of this chapter, it is worth surveying the prevalence of these themes in the other two novels from Frisch’s unofficial trilogy. His 1957 novel *Homo Faber* is a text that deals with a crisis of the self and its identity. The central protagonist and narrator is Walter Faber, an engineer who works for UNESCO in the field of ‘technische Hilfe für unterentwickelte Völker’.⁴ The figure of Faber constitutes an exaggerated type of modern-day rationalist and technologist, who renounces mythical and natural structures of thought and chooses to see life in terms of systematic principles and mathematical probabilities. As the title of the novel suggests, Faber is the ultimate

³ Ibid.

⁴ Max Frisch, *Homo Faber* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1957), p. 10.

homo faber, a working, functional being, yet he is socially withdrawn and injudicious. He lacks the traits that are unique to *homo sapiens*, namely the need to contemplate and understand mankind's natural environment. In this regard, Manfred Jurgensen describes Faber as a man, 'der an die Errechenbarkeit des Lebens glaubt, für den die Wissenschaft und Technik die Rolle Gottes übernommen haben und dem Formeln und Statistik mehr bedeuten als seine lebendig-ungewisse menschliche Verbindung'.⁵ Bernhard Irrgang similarly labels Faber as an 'Ingenieur und Verfechter einer emotionslosen Weltbetrachtung [...] ein Vertreter der konstruktiv-technischen Weltanschauung'.⁶ Hela Michot-Dietrich observes the distinctly existentialist nature of Faber's disengagement with the world around him, and draws a comparison between Frisch's protagonist with Meursault, the young Algerian *pied-noir* from Albert Camus' 1942 novel *L'Étranger*; she notes: 'Es handelt sich dabei vorwiegend um die anfängliche Gleichgültigkeit vor dem Leben, dessen Wert durch die Gegenüberstellung mit dem Tod gehoben und erkannt wird'.⁷ Michot-Dietrich goes on to draw a series of thematic parallels between the two novels, an example for which is the 'unerbittliche Sonne', which surfaces and irks both Meursault and Faber at moments of existential crisis.⁸ Faber travels about the globe with his cine-camera (HF: 23) and Hermes-Baby typewriter (HF: 32), his cherished devices that mediate his perceptions and lend them durability. He also carries his electric shaver (HF: 9), on which he relies to fend off any reminder of the residual degree to which he is still a creature of nature: 'Ich fühle mich nicht wohl, wenn unrasiert; nicht wegen der Leute, sondern meinetwegen. Ich habe dann das Gefühl, ich werde etwas wie eine Pflanze, wenn ich nicht rasiert bin, und ich greife unwillkürlich an mein Kinn' (HF: 27). Yet Faber is more than a 'typical' engineer or technologist. He fears human relationships – 'Menschen sind anstrengend' (HF: 8) – and he hides behind the orderly system of rules and structures that is technology. What the reader uncovers in *Homo Faber* is a certain attitude of mind fixed in rigid

⁵ Manfred Jurgensen, *Max Frisch: Die Romane* (Bern: Francke, 1972), p. 103.

⁶ Bernhard Irrgang, *Homo Faber: Arbeit, technische Lebensform und menschlicher Leib* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2010), p. 11.

⁷ Hela Michot-Dietrich, 'Symbolische Reflexionen über den "Étranger" und "Homo Faber"', in *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 30 (1980), pp. 423-437, p. 423.

⁸ Ibid. 'Die Sonne, Symbol des Lebens, Mittelpunkt unserer Welt und Quelle des Wohlbefindens für den größten Teil der Menschheit, spielt in beiden Bereichen eine außerordentlich wichtige Rolle, wenngleich eine unheilswangere. Im *Étranger* wohl auch im *Homo Faber* ist jeglicher Kontakt mit dem Tod, ob direkt oder indirekt, von der Sonne begleitet, und zwar von einer für den Menschen unerträglich heißen Sonne. [...]'

mental categories which Frisch has explored before in other fields of human endeavour, for example the legal world (Dr. Bohnenblust in *Stiller*), architecture (Willi Sturzenegger in *Stiller*), business (Hauswirt in *Die Schwierigen oder J'adore ce qui me brûle*),⁹ as well as the military (Ammann in *Die Schwierigen*). Like Walter Faber, these individuals live on the surface of life, clinging to facts and ideologies as endorsements of truth and stability. Such a perspective enables Frisch's characters to take refuge in practical affairs and neglect the more problematic aspects of human nature. As Butler confirms, it is 'precisely the process of showing an individual confronted with the disastrous one-sidedness of this type of thinking [that] gives *Homo Faber* its particular shape and interest'.¹⁰

The existentialist themes of identity, 'centricity' and freedom are also explored in the third novel of Frisch's unofficial trilogy, his 1964 novel *Mein Name sei Gantenbein*. It is here that the writer's philosophy once again comes to light, namely, that individual identity is constructed through the roles one plays – either in isolation or in relation to other individuals, whose roles are created in turn in interaction with that first individual and others. Redolent of a Bach fugue, or, as Wilma Iggers explicated in her 1965 review of the novel's English version, 'of Leonardo's multiple sketches of persons, or of Picasso's composite portraits',¹¹ *Mein Name sei Gantenbein* offers multiple variations on an inexorable existentialist dilemma without providing any clear answers: is human freedom possible for an individual (or a couple)? Not merely an aesthetic exercise, Frisch's *Gantenbein* functions as a sort of mystery novel, whereby the reader is propelled by curiosity to learn the identity of the anonymous man who dies in the opening scene but resurfaces as a character or narrator orchestrating the creation of these numerous identities and stories. The reader can never establish beyond reasonable doubt whether Gantenbein, a writer who following a car accident pretends to be blind in order to save his marriage, is the main narrator or the creation of another narrator or antagonist, among them the architect Svoboda and the art historian and Hermes

⁹ Max Frisch, *Die Schwierigen oder j'adore ce qui me brûle* (Zurich: Atlantis, 1957).

¹⁰ Butler, *ibid.*, p. 88.

¹¹ Wilma Iggers, 'Max Frisch: Mein Name sei Gantenbein' in *Books Abroad* 39:2 (Spring 1965), p. 186.

expert Enderlin. Rather than embracing storytelling as a safeguard against psychological disintegration, the narrative voices in *Mein Name sei Gantenbein* appear to consent to the crumbling of their personal identities and allude to an ‘implizierte moderne “Krise” der kollektiven Identität’.¹² With dizzying shifts between the merging of narrative perspectives, the work presents a narrator’s and his conceived characters’ fantasies about deliverance from the monotony of emotionally starved middle-aged life. As Frisch outlined in a letter of February 9 1964 to one of his Suhrkamp editors, the novelist Martin Walser, *Mein Name sei Gantenbein*, instead of developing a character, consists in the polyphonic task of ‘encircling’ characters with their projections and associations, ‘ein Ego einzukreisen durch seine Assoziationen,’ in his own words.¹³

But it is the 1954 novel *Stiller* which predates these other attempts to grapple with these issues of identity, self-diffusion, authenticity, freedom,¹⁴ angst, self-expectation and guilt in human relationships. Strikingly reminiscent of the themes of duplicity and identity dislocation later explored in Camus’ 1956 novel *La Chute*, in which the Parisian lawyer Jean-Baptiste Clamence abandons his former identity and takes refuge in a squalid bar in Amsterdam, part one of *Stiller* sees Frisch’s writing take on a zealous subjectivity in portraying man’s wretched position in mid-twentieth-century society and his incapability of making an intelligent deduction from the world in which he lives. Man is weary and frustrated, and it is from this departure point that Frisch’s protagonist in *Stiller* becomes embroiled in a, what he claims to be, case of mistaken identity. In possession of an American passport and calling himself Jim White, the protagonist is arrested at the Swiss border after being recognised as Anatol Stiller, the missing Swiss sculptor. Advised by his defence counsel to provide ‘nichts als die schlichte und pure Wahrheit,’ White/Stiller emphatically maintains throughout the course of the novel ‘Ich bin nicht Stiller!’ (ST: 9-14). At the end of the resulting court proceedings, the protagonist is convicted of being Stiller, and in Part Two, written from the perspective of his

¹² Hans Mayer, ‘Anmerkungen zu Stiller’, in *Über Max Frisch I* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1971), pp. 24-42, p. 29.

¹³ Max Frisch Archive, Max Frisch an Martin Walser, 09.02.1964, p. 1.

¹⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the themes of freedom and national identity in Frisch’s work within the framework of Swiss conformism and societal boredom, see: Mario Vargas Llosa, ‘Ist es möglich, Schweizer zu sein? Zu “Stiller”’, in *Jetzt: Max Frisch*, ed. Luis Bollinger, Walter Obschlager, Julian Schütt (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 2001), pp. 104-109.

public prosecutor and friend Rolf, the reader discovers how Stiller ultimately accepts his fate and moves back in with his wife Julika. Stiller's final hope of finding happiness with his wife is doomed to failure because of their dissimilar needs and fundamental personality differences. Although Stiller continues to seek pleasure in erotic relations and rebuffs the comfort and security of spiritual or family inclusion, it is only in the wake of Julika's death that Stiller is truly able to confront and live with his deficiencies.

Together with *Homo Faber* and *Mein Name sei Gantenbein*, *Stiller* forms part of an unofficial post-war trilogy in which Frisch strives to confront the humanistic and existential concerns of post-war European society. Yet, as has already been indicated, it is also a characteristic Frischean trait to leave matters unresolved in his writing. His literary works are rife with ultimately unresolved questions regarding the pressing problems of modern man, and at the end of each of them we find those very same questions redirected towards ourselves as readers. Frisch appears to challenge his audience to answer these questions for themselves, for they are 'questions that only we as individuals can answer'¹⁵: Is freedom possible? Is selfhood possible? Do we act in accord with our knowledge of the world and its dilemmas? Frisch provides no systematically formulated philosophy in answer to these questions, but rather presents to his audience a motley array of novels and plays that translate these abstract questions into concrete terms. Like the concrete contingencies of everyday life, the situations in Frisch's literary works are correlated with varying degrees of freedom, of self-realisation, and of deliberate action. As such, it remains as problematic a task to capture Frisch's views as it is to try to compartmentalise his responses to life and existence.¹⁶ Perhaps it is this trait that led Marcel Reich-Ranicki to conclude that Frisch 'kein Philosoph [sei].' Frisch at times seems more explicit about these concerns in his *Tagebücher*,¹⁷ in which he defines his political engagements, his capacity for resentment, the vigour of his enthusiasm for human rights, and his sensitivity to the conflict between culture and morality. He repeatedly refers to the state of remoteness and detachment experienced by artists, a

¹⁵ Peter Ruppert, 1973, *Existential Themes in the Plays of Max Frisch*, Ph.D Thesis, University of Iowa, p. 1.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Cf. Max Frisch, *Tagebuch 1946-1949* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1950), and *Tagebuch 1966-1971* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1972).

predicament which he attempted to address in his ‘*Rede zur Verleihung des Georg-Büchner-Preises*’ of 1958, affirming that it is the writer’s task to challenge critically and question (‘zersetzend zu wirken’). He goes on; ‘Indem wir keine Stellung nehmen (so sagt man doch?) zu Alternativen, die keine sind, haben wir durchaus eine Wirkung’.¹⁸ Victor Brombert also remarks on Frisch’s tendency for ‘self-questioning, in the form of self-addressed unanswered questionnaires, [which] betrays [Frisch’s] uneasiness and frustration. Suspicious of his own intellectual relation to reality, he yearns for an unmediated relation to life’.¹⁹ Yet for the most part these personal concerns raise more questions than they answer while nevertheless serving as valuable sources of orientation within Frisch’s literary oeuvre.

Like many of his other works, and like *Homo Faber* and *Mein Name sei Gantenbein* in particular, Frisch’s *Stiller*, we can begin with basic assertion that Frisch’s work deals with the continual self-exploration of a man’s identity and his fraught existence between subjective and objective reality. The novel’s central themes, human existence, identity and freedom, are generally held to signify the existentialist quest for the modern self and, in close correlation to that, the intricate dynamics of male-female relationships. In a draft of a dust-jacket blurb for the first edition, Frisch denied that *Stiller* is a novel about marriage, despite the fact that in the novel two marriages in crisis serve as experimental projection screens: ‘Dieses Buch ist, obschon es sein Anliegen an der Krise zweier Ehen demonstriert, kein Ehe-Roman’. He also insists that *Stiller* is not a travel book: ‘Es ist auch, obschon es von Granada, von Spanien, (...), von New York, von Kalifornien (...) erzählt, kein Reise-Buch’.²⁰ Applying the Kierkegaardian dictum ‘sich selbst wählen’ as a point of departure (ST: 7), Frisch confirms that the overarching themes of the novel are indeed the human personality and individual freedom, and suggests that his protagonist’s path can be divided into three stages of seeking to acquire freedom: ‘Selbsterkenntnis auch über seine Leistungen, Leben entfremdet, Annahme seiner

¹⁸ Cf. Max Frisch, ‘Emigranten: *Rede zur Verleihung des Georg-Büchner-Preises*’, in *Gesammelte Werke in zeitlicher Folge*, vol. 4, ed. Hans Mayer (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1976), pp. 229-244.

¹⁹ Victor H. Brombert, *In Praise of Antiheroes: Figures and Themes in Modern European Literature 1830-1980* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 81.

²⁰ This quote was suggested by Frisch for the novel’s blurb, and can be located in his unpublished *Notizbuch* at the Max Frisch Archiv. Also cited in: *Jetzt: Max Frisch*, ed. Luis Bollinger, Walter Obschlager, Julian Schütt (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 2001), p. 102.

selbst (wähle dich selbst), Verzicht darauf [...]’.²¹ The following section of this chapter will thus focus on these existentialist notions of the self and human freedom and will be divided into three main parts. Firstly it will look at Stiller/White’s inauthentic living by way of his fixation with images, or *Bildnisse*, his experiencing what we might refer to as a *Rollenzwang*, i.e. an individual’s entrapment in a certain social role, as well as the *Motiv des Ausbruchs* in the form of his physical and psychological ‘Selbstflucht’.²² Secondly, it will explore Frisch’s inclusion of the two Kierkegaard mottos and their religious significance in the novel. Thirdly, it will expound upon other existentialist traces in Frisch’s 1954 work, in particular the themes of ontological guilt and freedom as well as the non-compliance with one’s ‘true’ identity which are located in Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*, his essay ‘Existentialism is a Humanism’, *Huis Clos* and *Les jeux sont faits*, followed by the notion of the world as a fugitive structure and the existence of the ‘they-self’, both of which are explored by Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit*.

In the opening lines of a short essay ‘Konfrontation mit Julika,’ Frisch comments on the existentialist notions of self-alienation and self-acceptance that constitute integral themes in his post-war writing; he writes: ‘Unstimmigkeit unsere Existenz durch irgendeine Art von Selbstüberforderung, die zur Selbstentfremdung führt und schließlich zur Sterilität, weil es uns nicht gelingt, uns selbst anzunehmen – das ist, psychologisch gesprochen, das Problem’.²³ The protagonist in Frisch’s novel suffers from precisely such an ‘Unstimmigkeit’, or an intense case of identity diffusion and claims not to know who he is. He insists that he is James Larkin White, a symbolic name that evokes the image of an untarnished, clean sheet of white paper that is ready to be written on. Stiller wishes to dispose himself of his past and to begin with a new identity, wiping the slate clean, so to speak. It is his wish to be released from a world of forced images that he perceives as purely superficial. In his role as Mr White he tries to fulfil this need. He attempts to convince the outer world, including his wife Julika, to release him from the image of how everyone perceives him,

²¹ Ibid.

²² Cf. Vesna Kondrič Horvat, ‘Räumliche Bewegung als Flucht vor sich selbst’, in *Jenseits von Frisch und Dürrenmatt: Raumgestaltung in der gegenwärtigen Deutschschweizer Literatur*, ed. Dariusz Komorowski (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2009), pp. 25-38, p. 26.

²³ Max Frisch, ‘Konfrontation mit Julika: Aus dem Roman “Stiller, Aufzeichnungen im Gefängnis”’, in *Materialien zu Max Frisch Stiller*, vol. 1, ed. Walter Schmitz (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1978), pp. 35-36, p. 35.

namely, the image of Anatol Stiller. The following reveals Stiller/White's propensity for self-negation:

Mit Lügen ist es ohne weiteres zu machen, ein einziges Wort, ein sogenanntes Geständnis, und ich bin 'frei', das heißt in meinem Fall: dazu verdammt, eine Rolle zu spielen, die nichts mit mir zu tun hat. Andererseits: wie soll einer denn beweisen können, wer er in Wirklichkeit ist? Ich kann's nicht. Weiß ich es denn selbst, wer ich bin? Das ist die erschreckende Erfahrung dieser Untersuchungshaft: ich habe keine Sprache für meine Wirklichkeit! (ST: 65)

In his *Tagebuch 1946-1949* Frisch utters a secularised version of the Second Commandment, 'Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen' ('Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image').²⁴ *Stiller* echoes Frisch's repudiation of graven images in the way in which the novel problematises the adequacy, or inadequacy, of convictions and systems of belief in general. Generally speaking, the 'graven image' can be understood as a fixed image which human beings project onto others, making it difficult if not impossible for those persons to change or to exercise their own freedom. For Frisch, this represents a vicious attempt to destroy 'the living truth' of the free individual, who should be open to the possibility of change.²⁵ The Swiss writer Kurt Marti writes 'Man darf behaupten, dass das zweite Gebot in dieser mitmenschlichen Perspektive und Anwendung das strukturelle und ideelle Leitmotiv des ganzen Romans ist'.²⁶

Interestingly, it is not only in *Stiller* that Frisch probes the theme of inauthenticity and role-playing. In the 1961 play *Andorra* the question of existential freedom lingers insistently behind the ostensible theme of anti-Semitism. Frisch expresses these ideas most clearly in the blinkered attitudes of the Andorrans who force the protagonist Andri into the role of a Jew. The local carpenter is unwilling to believe that Andri is capable of doing anything other than *selling* furniture, despite his proven aptitude for carpentry. The soldier too refuses to recognise Andri's courage,

²⁴ Cf. Max Frisch, *Tagebuch 1946-1949* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1950).

²⁵ Marjorie Grene, 'Authenticity: An Existential Virtue', in *Ethics* 62, July 1952, pp. 266-274, p. 266.

²⁶ Kurt Marti, 'Das zweite Gebot im "Stiller" von Max Frisch', in *Materialien zu Max Frisch Stiller*, vol. 1, ed. Walter Schmitz (Suhrkamp: Frankfurt a/M: 1978), pp. 211-216, p. 214.

even though he was prepared to stand up to the former's threatening advances and knock his cap off his head. The irony lies not only in the fact that the Andorrans perceive 'Jewish' features in Andri when he is not even a Jew, but more significantly in the fact that Andri adapts to the images which others project onto him. Andri is essentially robbed of his authenticity, a notion which Sartre deals with in both *Being and Nothing* and in his 1944 play *Huis Clos*, in which it is proclaimed: 'L'enfer, c'est les autres' ('Hell is other people'). Andri fights in vain to defend his authenticity, and his helplessness is exemplified by his reactions to looking in a mirror: 'Man hat mir gesagt, wie meinesgleichen sich bewege, nämlich so und so, und ich bin vor den Spiegel getreten fast jeden Abend. Sie haben recht. Ich bewege mich so und so. Ich kann nichts anders'. Frisch is emphasising that human minds do not, like mirrors, reflect a pre-existing world of reality; the world of reality is a projection of our consciousness. This danger is similarly illustrated in Sartre's 1943 play *Les Mouches*, where the character King Aegisthus is trapped in the image which he forced upon his people. Looking at his reflection, he laments, much like Andri: 'I have come to see myself *only as they see me*. I peer into the dark pit of their souls and there, deep down, I see the image that I have built up. I shudder, but I cannot take my eyes off it. Almighty Zeus, who am I? Am I anything more than the dread others have of me?'²⁷ Frisch's 1948 play *Als der Krieg zu Ende war* similarly appears to repudiate *Bildnisse* created by prejudgment and cliché-ridden thinking about national characteristics. After being compassionately treated by a Russian soldier, the character Agnes seeks to move away from all ideas pertaining to Nazi ideology and see the Russians as human beings. Yet the Russian's silence in conversation succeeds in educating the whereabouts of Agnes's husband, who is in hiding, thus proving that the reality of the situation is in fact thornier than Agnes first envisaged. As W. G. Cunliffe rightly observes, Frisch is seeking to impart in his play that it is not merely stereotyped ideas that dictate our actions and lead us into inauthenticity, but rather the words that can obfuscate the nature of things.²⁸ Ultimately Agnes's desire to rebuff stereotypes touches upon the fundamental

²⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'The Flies', in *Altona; Men without Shadows; The Flies*, trans. S. Gilbert (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p. 291.

²⁸ W. G. Cunliffe, 'Die Kunst, ohne Geschichte abzuschwimmen: Existenzialistisches Strukturprinzip in *Stiller*, *Homo Faber* und *Mein Name sei Gantenbein*', in *Max Frisch: Aspekte des Prosawerks*, ed. Gerhard P. Knapp (Bern: Lang, 1978), pp. 103-122, p. 116.

existentialist issue of authenticity, as aphoristically expressed by Nietzsche: 'Überzeugungen sind gefährlichere Feinde der Wahrheit als die Lüge'.²⁹

Despite releasing himself from his former image, Frisch's protagonist Stiller exhibits an inability to maintain his role. This derives from two sources, firstly from his rejection of the unreasonable demands of his fellow human beings, and secondly, and perhaps most crucially, from the demands he exerts on himself. The themes concerning the self, existential angst and self-alienation essentially derive from Frisch's narrative, namely, how Ludwig Anatol Stiller is remanded in custody in a Swiss prison. Through his newly assumed role, Stiller had sought to distance himself from himself by attempting to modify his former identity, but the Swiss court seeks to prove that he in fact remains Anatol Stiller. In order to confirm their suspicions, the court requests that he recount his life in a journal. In his role as Mr White, Stiller proceeds to write about himself from the perspective of a stranger. Claiming not to know Stiller, he writes down that which he is told by Stiller's friends and relatives who visit him, which simultaneously enables him to work through his own history. Throughout the course of the novel the characters Stiller and White steadily combine until there can be little doubt remaining that they are outwardly the same person.

During Stiller's incarceration period the ruthlessness of these images becomes clear. His fellow beings recognise him as Stiller and refuse to acknowledge the existence of Jim White. When questioned about his external identity, Stiller wishes to express his inner identity. His fictitious stories also fulfil this function, whose reality cannot be measured on factuality but only on personal experience. The prison guard Knobel asks him: 'Sind Sie denn Jim White?' (ST: 130) forcing Stiller to commit himself to matters of external reality. Yet Stiller's reply is targeted towards his inner identity when he remarks: 'Nein, [...] das gerade nicht! Aber was ich selbst erlebt habe, sehen Sie, das war genau das gleiche – genau' (ST: 130). With the exception of Knobel, nobody attempts to understand Stiller's assertions regarding his true self. They insist on his external identity as Anatol Stiller, denying him both physical or

²⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches: Ein Buch für freie Geister* (Stuttgart: Körner, 1964), p. 312.

mental freedom. As such Stiller fails as much to enter into genuine contact with the outside world, as does this outer world fail to understand Stiller's psychology.

The shape and substance of Stiller's spiritual odyssey can be plotted via a series of subjective contemplations which occur exclusively in the novel's odd-numbered *Hefte* and which bring them into dialectical relationship with the more objective content of the even-numbered ones. Expectedly, these observations, some of which appear more like philosophical deliberations, others more like pangs of anxiety and existential angst, are most numerous in the seventh and final *Heft*, in which the battle to fuse the identities of Jim White and Anatol Stiller into a viable union is evidently successful. However, the deeply sombre nature of Stiller's psychological journey is plain enough in the first *Heft*. Alongside the humour and amusing occurrences, and thus relativising them, Frisch has placed clear pointers to Stiller's existential crisis.

The problem surrounding the question of his self-acceptance is rooted in Stiller's inferiority complex. The reader learns that as a child Stiller was adored and admired by his mother who readily exaggerated and inflated his uniqueness and talents:

Meine Mutter war überzeugt, dass ich mit diesem Leben schon fertig werde. [...] Sie liebte es, wenn ich ihr etwas vormachte, und [...] die Sorge meiner Mutter bestand eher darin, ob wohl die Person, die ich dereinst [heiraten] würde, auch meiner wirklich ganz würdig wäre. [...] Meine Mutter und ich hielten zusammen, nach einer Aussage meines Stiefvaters, wie die Kletten. (ST: 245/6)

In his psychoanalytical study of Frisch's novel, Fritz Gelsing comments on the notion of 'Kletten,' and concludes how 'dieses überzogene "Bemuttern" ein distanzlos-enges Verhältnis [schafft]'.³⁰ Stiller's mother refuses to see her son as he really is and smothers him with her own demands and expectations. Stiller reflects on how his mother once painstakingly collected money to enable her son to have flute lessons: 'Meine Mutter, weiß ich, sparte es sich an Putzfrauen und Glätterinnen

³⁰ Fritz Gelsing, *Die Psychoanalyse der literarischen Form: Stiller von Max Frisch* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1988), p. 86.

ab, putzte und bügelte selbst, auf daß sie jeden Monat eine Flötenstunde bezahlen konnte; denn ich galt als begabt' (ST: 246). Stiller subsequently learns to embrace his mother's wishes as best he can so as not to risk losing her affections and causing her disappointment. This is reflected in Stiller's recollection of how he once tried to spit cherry stones at his old neighbour as he sat reading in the garden: '[...] meine Mutter ereiferte sich über seinen unerhörten Verdacht dermaßen, dass ich alles bestritt, um sie vor dem Herrn nicht bloßzustellen' (ST: 246). As such, the young Stiller becomes adept at not only deceiving and misleading those around him, but also at complying with and conforming to these fabricated and deceitful images of himself. As Gunda Lusser-Mertelsmann affirms, it is most likely Stiller's duplicitous relationship with his mother that triggers his lifelong distorted sense of self: 'Seine [Stillers] Selbstverwirklichung bestand darin, die Erwartungen der Welt wie ehemals die der Mutter zu erfüllen'.³¹ Also commenting on the long-term consequences of Stiller's 'Selbstüberforderung' and his fundamental lack of self-acceptance, Gesing writes: 'Gleichzeitig schafft überfordernde Erziehung Dauerlabilität des Selbstwertgefühls, und entsprechend leidet Stiller [...] an der klassischen Minderwertigkeitsangst aus übertriebener Anforderung an sich selbst [...]'.³²

As a result, the adult Stiller remains transfixed with falsified images, for he is unable to accept the reality of himself as an everyday human nullity. Commenting on Stiller's compliancy with fraudulent *Bildnisse*, Kurt Marti observes:

Er [Stiller] begnügt sich damit, ein Mensch nach eigenem Entwurf und Bild sein zu wollen. Dieses eigene Bild, nach welchem der Mensch sich zu 'bilden', zu schaffen versucht, erweist sich jedoch paradoxerweise als fremdes und deshalb falsches Bild, das darauf ausgerichtete Leben als Unmöglichkeit. [...] Er will nicht sein, der er ist. So zerfällt er mit sich selber, gerät, wie Frisch es nennt, in die Selbstüberforderung und Selbstentfremdung.³³

³¹ Gunda Lusser-Mertelsmann, *Max Frisch* (Zurich: Pro Helvetia, 1976) p. 92.

³² Gesing, *ibid.*

³³ Kurt Marti, 'Das zweite Gebot im "Stiller"', p. 212.

Over the course of the novel Stiller steadily undergoes a process of self-realisation, which takes place over multiple phases. These are not depicted chronologically by Frisch, but appear as random fragments. In the first phase Stiller is shown living together with his wife Julika in Zurich. During this period his life is dominated by a multitude of self-created images which stem from the incessant *Selbstüberforderungen* that Stiller makes of himself. These roles include an artist, soldier, and saviour to his wife Julika. Stiller initially appears to exercise an authentic relationship towards his artistry, but following his first public success, he becomes overwhelmed by the need to satisfy the expectations of his surroundings. Due to this his artistic world rescinds into inauthenticity and roleplaying. Stiller remarks retrospectively:

Ganz im Anfang meiner Künstlerei, mag sein, war ich allein, vermochte ich es beinahe, in einem wirklichen Sinn allein zu sein in der Hoffnung, in Lehm und Gips mich verwirklichen zu können; aber diese Hoffnung währte nicht lang, und schon war der Ehrgeiz da, die Freude in Hinsicht auf Anerkennung, die Sorge in Hinsicht auf Geringschätzung. (ST: 252-253)

Stiller's loss of identity can be partly explained due to the fact that he is intensely dependent on the opinions and recognition of his fellow beings. He is simply not able to establish a sense of self-reference dictated by his inner security that would allow him a sense of emotional autonomy when facing the demands and opinions of the outside world. The protagonist Stiller tries to impart to his fellow beings a definitive image of himself which he hopes to correspond to, whether or not it appears this way in reality. His artist's studio for instance seems less as an authentic site of his artistic productions than a means for him to preserve the busts and plastic figures which exemplify his fixation with idols and false images. These four walls of his atelier can similarly be viewed as some sort of monastic enclosure that protects Stiller's hermit-like existence. Stiller's defence of his withdrawn and cloistered lifestyle in his artist's studio is reinforced during a heated exchange with Julika after she insists that he *leave* the atelier. Julika's command that her husband *get out of her sight* and thereby *leave* his workshop ('Geh! Bitte. Geh hinaus! (ST: 74)) can be read as a figurative indication that she desires him to *renounce* or *abandon* his

preoccupation with false images, yet Stiller's response 'Julika, das ist mein Atelier' (ST: 74) denotes an unequivocal territorial claim and, by implication, an ardent defence of his 'inauthentic' lifestyle. This monastic and isolated freedom is something that Stiller/White similarly learns to value during his period of incarceration: 'Ich sitze in meiner Zelle, Blick gegen die Mauer und ich sehe die Wüste' (ST: 22), 'Ich sitze in meiner Zelle, Blick gegen die Mauer und ich sehe Mexico, die schwimmenden Gärten von Mexico' (ST: 23). Both locations constitute a prison of the inner life for Frisch's protagonist, and it is in these two places, away from everyday interferences and distractions, that Stiller/White can reach the still centre of self.

In an attempt to compensate for his feelings of personal inadequacy, the character Stiller internalises both the alleged and actual demands and pretensions of the outside world, which become a benchmark for his actions, and which will ultimately bring about his downfall. Unnerved by a favourable review of his work as a sculptor, and feeling overwhelmed by the sudden expectations aroused in the world around him, Stiller feels his only option is to flee from his situation. The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War merely offered a convenient and convincing escape route from what Stiller felt to be constricting social pressures. This incidentally represents yet another attempt by Frisch's protagonist at *Selbstüberforderung*: the role of a soldier, in which he perceives himself as a failure when he is overpowered without a struggle by enemy soldiers at the river Tajo. What Monika Wintsch-Spiess denotes as a 'Bewährungsprobe seines Größenwahns',³⁴ Stiller's injudicious gesture of courage and grandeur in Spain, stemming from his 'Angst [davor], minderwertig zu sein', leaves him feeling ill at ease in his chosen role once again.

As a soldier in the Spanish Civil War, Stiller was unable to shoot at his enemies, who quickly move to capture him. He subsequently convinces himself of the following: '– warum ich nicht geschossen habe? [...] Weil ich ein Versager bin. Ganz einfach!' After returning home to Zurich, the protagonist's deception deepens when he is asked to recount his 'tolle Geschichte von Toledo' (ST: 106), and to

³⁴ Monika Wintsch-Spiess, *Zum Problem der Identität im Werk Max Frischs* (Zurich: Juris, 1965), p. 84.

explain why he didn't shoot. Knowing that his failure of courage is being interpreted as humanitarianism, Stiller explains: 'er [erlebte] die vier Faschisten einfach als Menschen, und es war ihm unmöglich, auf Menschen zu schießen. Punktum!' (ST: 107). His Swiss friends herald him as 'Held des Menschlichen,' and honour his performance as a 'Sieg [...] über alles Ideologische' (ST: 108). In this way he becomes a prisoner of his friends' and acquaintances' view of himself. For Stiller, his experience in Spain was a failure, an act of cowardice, and a symbol of sexual impotence: 'Ich bin kein Mann. Jahrelang habe ich noch davon geträumt: ich möchte schießen, aber es schießt nicht – ich brauche dir nicht zu sagen, was das heißt, es ist der typische Traum der Impotenz'. This conclusion is also reached in Klaus Müller-Salget's study of the novel, where he writes: 'Was andere einen Sieg des Menschlichen nennen, ist für ihn selbst ein Versagen, und zwar in umfassendem Sinne: ein Verrat an den Kameraden und ein Versagen als Mann'.³⁵ Yet as the reader later discovers, Stiller's experiences at Tajo are presented to the reader in two separate versions. When in conversation with his former lover Sibylle, posing with self-pity and feelings of inferiority that resulted from his time in combat, Stiller tells his story in anecdotal form. It was a 'Sieg des Menschlichen, [...] Sieg des konkreten Erlebnisses über alles Ideologische' (ST: 203), in which he pretends, at the decisive moment, to have recognized the enemy as moral beings. Through this he achieves the desired effect of making others see him as he wishes to be seen.

Following this, Stiller assumes another role, through which he hopes to compensate for his failings as both a man and a combatant, namely the role of saviour for his wife Julika. Ultimately, the theme of marriage in the novel and the misaligning of images that it brings about become a vehicle through which Frisch articulates the profundity of Stiller's existentialist despair. Despite Frisch's own claims that *Stiller* is not a novel about marriage ('kein Ehe-Roman'), marriage remains a central preoccupation of much of his dramatic work and his novels, and one through which he is able to probe questions of the self and human identity. In the novel, the theme of marriage constitutes an expression of the protagonist's relationship with his wife Julika at its deepest level and represents 'the institution to which Frisch's characters look in their search for a centric principle to give coherence and purpose to their

³⁵ Klaus Müller-Salget, *Literaturwissen: Max Frisch* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2007), p. 78.

lives',³⁶ as Butler has put it. The marital life of Julika and Stiller is heavily influenced by the fact that both of them 'auf eine unselige Weise zueinander paßten. Sie brauchten einander von ihrer Angst her' (ST: 69). Both possess a fear of personal inadequacy, yet both live in the hope that their partner can compensate for their respective personal defects.

Julika is plagued by her insecurity of not being a complete woman; we are thus informed 'Jedenfalls hatte die schöne Julika eine heimliche Angst, keine Frau zu sein' (ST: 69). Stiller, on the other hand, worries about his impotence and unmanliness: 'Und auch Stiller, scheint es, stand damals unter einer steten Angst, in irgendeinem Sinn nicht zu genügen' (ST: 69). His perceived act of spinelessness at the river Tajo during the Spanish Civil War, for instance, is related by Mr White as a decidedly feminine reticence and a hypersensitivity which earns Stiller the label of 'eine männliche Mimose, [...] ein Mann von krankhafter Ich-Bezogenheit und entsprechender Empfindlichkeit' (ST: 82/3). Thus the tensions and strains between the couple are seen to be expressed on the one hand by frigidity, and on the other by virility. This can also be seen in Julika's relationship with her work as a ballerina which exposes her fundamental narcissism – 'pure Narzißmus' (ST: 77) – exemplified most clearly by her voluptuous pleasure on stage, from which she derives almost sexual delight. She perceives it as 'ein Labsal, auf der Bühne zu stehen; tausend fremde Blicke auf ihren Körper zu fühlen' (ST: 78). The thrill of the performance even 'machte Julika weniger aus, als wenn Stiller, ihr Mann, seine harte und von der Bilderhauerei etwas rauhe Hand auf ihren Körper legte' (ST: 78). The stage allows her to be the centre of everyone's attention. In an ironic sense, it is only in the act of performing that Julika feels wholly natural, free and uninhibited. She can be entrancing yet untouchable, protected by the music. As Jurgensen notes, 'Frisch läßt keinen Zweifel daran, daß das Ballett für Julika die einzige Möglichkeit der Selbstgestaltung bedeutet'.³⁷ Stiller, by contrast, feels his impotence highlighted through his shortcomings as a soldier and confirmed by his comparative failure as an artist and breadwinner. This sexual imbalance can be seen to taint their relationship from the outset, foreshadowed by a flippant remark uttered by Julika on their wedding night after she made him feel like he had contaminated her. The comment

³⁶ Butler, *The Novels*, p. 68.

³⁷ Jurgensen, p. 67.

itself is never made explicit, although it most likely alludes to Julika's intense aversion to sexual contact. From this point onwards, Stiller perceives himself as a repulsive and repellent being. He notes: 'ich [komme] mir vor wie ein öliger, verschwitzter, stinkiger Fischer mit einer kristallklaren Wasserfee!' (ST: 76) The result of this sterile impasse – Julika's deteriorating health and her prioritising her career over children, and Stiller feeling forced to accept her dog Foxli as a substitute ('Stiller war einfach eifersüchtig auf ihren Hund' (ST: 81)) – can be seen as a 'mutual retreat from self-commitment'.³⁸ Julika engrosses herself in her dancing with its concomitant need for care and protection, whilst Stiller succumbs to his blatant egocentricity. It is essentially this disguised sense of self-reference that prevents them from having a true connection with the other. They are both equally incapable due to their feigned self-relations to recognise themselves, let alone talk about it. As such, they lack an effective means of communication

In addition to this disguised self-reference, a location of their 'true' identities becomes virtually unachievable due to their mutual projecting of images onto one another. Public prosecutor Rolf affirms in the afterword: 'Es gibt allerlei Sorten von Prüfsteinen; Stiller hatte immerhin den seinen gefunden' (ST: 307-8), and Stiller finds his touchstone by forcing his wife Julika into the role of a stand-offish, dull, sickly, frigid woman, whilst he sees himself playing the part of her liberator. Through misalignment of these images, any attempt to detect a true sense of being or the individual's original identity becomes increasingly impossible.

This propensity for inauthenticity does not go unnoticed, however. The characters Stiller and Julika both recognise the mechanism of images and roles under which their relationship suffers. During her early time in hospital (ST: 100ff.), Julika meets a young sanatorium veteran in the hospital, who perceptively observes in Julika's marriage to Stiller a domineering interrelationship between images of the self and images of the other: 'Wer sich selbst immer nur als Opfer sieht, meine ich, kommt sich selbst nie auf die Schliche,' he says; 'Ursache und Wirkung sind nie in zwei Personen getrennt, schon gar nicht in Mann und Frau [...]: eigentlich alles, was sie tun oder nicht tun, begründen Sie mit etwas, was beispielsweise Ihr Mann nicht getan oder getan hat' (ST: 101-2). Yet the resentful Julika refuses to tolerate any

³⁸ Butler, p. 69.

further interference and, consequently, the couple remain in a vicious circle, trapped in their roles as sufferer and offender, unable to enter into an honest, truthful dialogue. Julika constantly excuses herself before her husband, even when there is nothing to excuse, and thereby implies the recognition of Stiller's guilt whilst he permanently excuses himself: 'mit schlechtem Gewissen von vornherein [...], der es stets als seine Schuld empfinden wird, wenn etwas nicht klappt' (ST: 173). Unable to confront his existential despair, Stiller eventually flees Zurich, not without summing up their discussions for separation: 'Hätte ich dich nicht zu meiner Bewährungsprobe gemacht, wärest du auch nie auf diese Idee gekommen, mich durch dein Kranksein zu fesseln, und wir hätten einander auf natürliche Weise geliebt, ich weiß es nicht, oder uns auf natürliche Weise getrennt' (ST: 113).

In the sixth *Heft*, his former lover Sybille attempts to alert Stiller/White to his fixation with inauthentic images and role-playing. During a meeting in his artist's studio Stiller/White starts miming the role of a bull in a bullfight, encouraging Sybille to play the matador (ST: 195-196). Stiller/White appears engrossed in his role, whilst Sybille finds difficulty in sharing his admiration for the game. In this scene, it is a plausible assertion that Stiller/White is unconsciously seeking to project multiple images onto Sybille: firstly that of the matador, but also that of a pseudo wife-figure, in how the careful, spritely 'dance' of the matador evokes the composed, artful dance of the ballet, as performed by his wife Julika. Any exchange or dialogue between Stiller/White and Sybille becomes increasingly difficult and their conversation becomes, as a result of Stiller/White's projecting images, a mere masquerade. According to Martin Balle, their discourse dwindles into 'die gemeinsam ausgehaltene Leere'.³⁹ Stiller/White is engrossed in his role as the bull, envisioning the sights and sounds as if awaiting the matador in the arena: 'Der Geist erscheint als silbern-weißer Matador, die blanke Klinge unter dem roten Tuch, nicht um zu töten, o nein, sondern um zu siegen' (ST: 197). It is only through clicking her 'Dunhill-Feuerzeug' (ST: 197) that Sybille is able to rouse Stiller/White from his trance-like state. Unlike Julika, the shrewd Sybille succeeds in looking behind the images and locates Stiller's underlying problem: 'Du schämst dich, dass du so bist, wie du bist. Wer verlangt von dir, dass du ein Kämpfer bist, ein Krieger, einer, der

³⁹ Martin Balle, *Sich selbst geschrieben: Literatur als Psychoanalyse* (Munich: Iudicium, 1994), p. 103.

schießen kann? Du hast dich nicht bewährt, findest du, damals in Spanien. Wer bestreitet es! Aber vielleicht hast du dich als jemand bewähren wollen, der du gar nicht bist' (ST: 204). Sybille exposes Stiller/White's propensity to make excessive demands of himself and encourages him to speak openly, which proves unsuccessful: 'wahrscheinlich kann eine Frau das nicht verstehen' (ST: 204). Stiller/White is '[...] nicht bereit, nicht imstande, geliebt zu werden als der Mensch, der er ist, und daher vernachlässigt er unwillkürlich jede Frau, die ihn wahrhaft liebt, denn nähme er ihre Liebe wirklich ernst, so wäre er ja genötigt, infolgedessen sich selbst anzunehmen – davon ist er weit entfernt!' (ST: 192)

Stiller/White's urgent wish to convince his fellow beings of being a different Stiller reveals how, in spite of his awareness of the need for self-acceptance, he is still very far from being an internally independent self. Furthermore it is impossible for him to do without the recognition of others and to use himself as a benchmark for his behaviour and actions. Just before his reunion with Julika following his flight from Zurich he prepares his story about Isidor in order to warn her from treating him like the old Stiller. Isidor is a reputable pharmacist who lives in 'bester Ordnung.' He is, however, so distressed by his wife's constant nagging and questions that he breaks free from his life and escapes to the foreign legion. The parabolic significance of this reveals itself to Julika in the erroneous reaction of his wife upon his return. She receives him with the same nagging words as before, whereupon Isidor leaves her for good. Yet Julika does not understand what Stiller wishes to impart through his story and reacts to the story in a similar way to Isidor's wife, affirming that he is 'noch immer der gleiche, kein vernünftiges Wort kann man reden mit dir' (ST: 44). She refuses to accept Stiller's transformation, and Stiller verifies: 'Ich könnte aussehen wie ein Gnom, wie ein Minotaurus, wie – ich weiß nicht was! – und es würde nichts ändern, überhaupt nichts, sie ist einfach außerstande, ein anderes Wesen wahrzunehmen als ihren verschollenen Stiller' (ST: 46).

By contrast, he himself in his role as James White attempts to see her in a new light. He speaks of 'zwei verschiedene[n] Juliken' (ST: 130), and discovers that she is different than he initially thought. He strives for a new beginning in the hope that a new relationship is possible. It soon becomes clear, however, that neither are capable of true, unprejudiced communication without images; James White alias

Stiller observes:

Ich fand es nun ebenfalls traurig, dass zwei Menschen, obzwar sie einander gegenüber sitzen, Aug in Auge, einander nicht wahrzunehmen vermögen. [...] Jedes Gespräch zwischen dieser Frau [Julika] und mir [Stiller] so schien mir, ist fertig, bevor wir's anfangen, und jede Handlung [...] ist schon im voraus gedeutet, [...] indem sie in jedem Fall nur als eine angemessene oder unangemessene, eine erwartete oder unerwartete Handlung des verschollenen Stiller erscheinen wird, nie als meine. (ST: 64)

Stiller/White nevertheless clings to the idea that she will acknowledge his transformation and will accept him as a new person. For him this would mean a successful new phase for their relationship, and would represent an attempt to prove himself in his transformation. For Stiller/White this implies being recognised by Julika in his alteration, wherein the proof of this pointlessness has already been obtained: The necessary changes consist in self-acceptance, which implies being freed from the dependency on the outside world. Stiller/White is able to free himself from Julika's judgement and believes that the success of his relationship is an existential prerequisite for his self-acceptance.

Just when he wants to ask Julika for a new start in their relationship, he describes her as his last and only chance at salvation. He likens this new start to walking on water: 'Versuch, auf dem Wasser zu wandeln' (ST: 321). In his *Tagebuch 1946-1949*, Frisch can be seen to use this motif as a means to symbolise the wonder of self-discovery and self-acceptance, where Marion is alleged to have walked on water with help of the angels. 'Warum kommst du nicht?' 'Über das Wasser...?' [...]

Marion fragt: 'Wo, wenn du ein Engel bist, führst du mich hin?' 'Zu dir –'.⁴⁰ It thus becomes evident that Stiller/White deems Julika as an essential function on his journey of self-discovery. Once the proof of his faux external identity has been crushed, he is ready to give up on everything so long as Julika, 'so sie mich [Stiller] wirklich liebt, kein Geständnis von mir braucht, daß ich ihr verschollener Gatte sei' (ST: 276). Yet the on-site inspection, which, through the confrontation with Stiller's old atelier and then with his father, ultimately confirms his former identity, also

⁴⁰ Frisch, *Tagebuch 1946-1949*, pp. 158-159.

reveals that Julika is anything but ready to release him from his fixing of images. He feels betrayed by her, and in an act of helplessness against his indomitable surroundings he ruptures in a final rebellious outburst against his fixation of images the sculptures that symbolize his past life as Stiller. The symbolism of this is self-evident. He destroys ‘nur so das Kleine, während die größeren Arbeiten [...], weil ich sie nicht vom Sockel heben konnte, meine Wut überdauern würden’ (ST: 282). As he demolishes these sculptures and mementos of his past he is ‘ohne Angst, das Falsche zu tun, und wieder einmal [er] selbst’ (ST: 283). Yet this rage and desire for destruction is essentially futile. Julika still does not understand, and Stiller appears utterly resigned. He comments: ‘und ich stehe unverwandelt wie sie’ (ST: 284). Even conquering his *Bildniszwang* is not enough to rekindle his relationship. Nevertheless, the demolition of his art from the past represents a pivotal step towards his self-acceptance. Stiller/White resents their need to have control over him – ‘bloß um mich einbürgen zu können und Ordnung zu haben’ (ST: 259), yet in order finally to ‘free’ himself from his past he demonstrates his willingness ‘daraus hervorzugehen als ein nichtiger und ohnmächtiger Mensch’ (ST: 259), i.e. to attend to his perceived ‘Nichtigkeit.’

Shortly after this incident Stiller/White is convicted of being Anatol Stiller. His attempts to convince the world have failed, and Stiller complies with his conviction. The final phase appears in the form of an afterward from Rolf, the public prosecutor, and is no longer told from Stiller’s perspective. In a sense both Stiller and Julika are freed from the subjective, one-sided view of the diarist Stiller/White and are now depicted from a different perspective:

Das Bildnis, das diese Aufzeichnungen von Frau Julika geben, bestürzte mich; es verrät mehr über den Bildner, dünkt mich, als über die Person, die von diesem Bildnis vergewaltigt worden ist. Ob nicht schon in dem Unterfangen, einen lebendigen Menschen abzubilden, etwas Unmenschliches liegt, ist eine große Frage. Sie trifft Stiller wesentlich. (ST: 305)

In the meantime Stiller and Julika have begun a new life in Glion, but it soon becomes clear that they have managed neither to free themselves from their bilateral *Bildnisse* nor to find mutual ground for cooperation and communication. Julika asks Rolf in desperation “‘Warum will Stiller mich immer ändern?’” [...]“Wissen Sie

Rolf, was er immer von mir erwartet?’” (ST: 304). The interaction between the two remains severely damaged. Julika simply cannot comprehend Stiller’s expectations of her, and remains plagued by her insecurities that he is looking to change her. As a result, she cloisters herself away even more. She does not inform Stiller about her worsening state of health. Rolf perceives Stiller’s obliviousness regarding his wife’s condition in the following passage: ‘Ich lenkte das Gespräch auf den Wein, als Stiller mich fragte, wie ich denn Julika fände. “Ich meine gesundheitlich”, sagte er. “Sieht sie nicht großartig aus? ”’ (ST: 305). After all this time, Stiller continues to live with an idealised image of his wife that thoroughly fails to correspond to the advanced stage of her illness.

Rolf’s later accounts of their cohabitation reveals how their allocation of roles remains unchanged. Julika fashions herself as the sufferer, and Stiller as the redeemer. Both live separate lives, incapable of achieving a sense of togetherness. Tragically, Julika dies before the couple are ever able to rectify their differences: ‘Der Tod war vor einer halben Stunde erfolgt, für den Arzt offenbar überraschend. Meinem anderen Wunsch, Frau Stiller zu sehen, wurde nicht entsprochen’ (ST: 327). Stiller arrives at the hospital too late, and it is left to the reader to infer whether Stiller’s love for his wife could have been her saviour. Prior to Stiller’s final visit to the hospital, Rolf urges his friend to see sense: ‘Du liebst sie. Du hast angefangen, sie zu lieben, und Julika ist nicht gestorben, noch ist alles möglich’ (ST: 323).

Following Julika’s death, Stiller resumes a solitary life in Glion. Unable to find security in his own self-reference without being defined by others, Stiller concludes that a remote existence is the only viable solution in his attempt to avoid external dependencies. In his life as a hermit in total isolation he can retain and protect his inner security and independence from possible images.

KIERKEGAARDIAN EXISTENTIALISM IN *STILLER*

There are two Kierkegaard citations in *Stiller*; before we look at them in more detail it is worthwhile to briefly remind ourselves of the most prominent tenets that characterise Kierkegaard’s existential philosophy more generally. Kierkegaardian

thinking emerged in opposition to Kantianism and Hegelianism, the speculative, systematic philosophies that characterised late-eighteenth and early-to-mid-nineteenth-century thinking. According to Kierkegaard, any objective philosophy is inadequate for human beings, as it disregards the situatedness of the thinker by whom it is thought and for whom it is intended. Life is inherently contradictory and this cannot be resolved, as Hegel suggested, by simply annulling opposites and dialectically merging them into higher entities, i.e. through the practice of mediation, and the fusing of theses and antitheses into syntheses. A system like this does not assist the individual in his practical and subjective existence, as it is thought for its own sake, and it does not implicate or commit the individual. Existence requires that decisions be made and all necessary decisiveness be rooted in subjectivity. For Kierkegaard every personal decision in life is a leap of thought from the known into the unknown; life is a perennial question of choosing and taking risks. The greatest and most challenging leap the individual can make is the leap into what is not merely unknown but even absurd, beyond human comprehension, viz. the leap into faith, i.e. accepting what Kierkegaard regards as the paradox of the existence of God (whereby the infinite reveals itself as finite). This is an objective uncertainty that, through the leap into faith, becomes a subjective truth. However, before taking the risk, the individual can suffer the greatest possible dread and anxiety; it is only by consciously embracing the risk and facing up to one's anxiety that one can become free.

Kierkegaard marks the *Three Stages of Life's Way* as the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious phase. The aesthetic individual 'lives in the blue yonder'.⁴¹ He explores all of life's possibilities without binding himself to a previously made decision. He does progress, but only arbitrarily so; he does not *will* his own progression, he never becomes committed by his own choice. The ethical individual, on the other hand, wills his own progression by making a previous decision binding upon himself, i.e. by making the same choice repeatedly and continually. As a result, his actions are no longer determined merely by accidental circumstances, and so he becomes more free. The religious individual has made the final choice, the leap into faith. In the

⁴¹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaard's Writings, IV, Part II: Either/Or: Part II*, trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 258.

religious stage alone can the individual overcome life's uncertainty successfully, which is inherent in the process of becoming. But in order to choose at all, he must first have embraced the 'doubleness' characteristic of existence, i.e. he must understand that he is not necessarily 'within himself', he must learn to be subjective, which means that he must strive to become what he already is.

This essentially sums up the content of *Stiller*, most notably before his escape. Stiller was engaged in wanting to be what he was not, and in doing so was striving away from himself. To strive to become what one already is, is what Kierkegaard calls 'choosing oneself'. Before one can carry out this task of choosing oneself one faces two main conditions. The first is the degree of resignation. This resignation is not merely passive endurance, or what Rolf calls in the Epilogue 'eine schlappe Resignation' (ST: 316), but an active renunciation of temporal things with a view to eternity. It is not faith, but 'the last stage which goes before faith'. The second condition for choosing oneself is despair. There are various types of despair corresponding to the various stages in life. The ethical individual has chosen himself in his despair. By active despair, i.e. the willing it, the individual chooses his eternal self and thereby is born anew, is transformed. He chooses a self that was there before (otherwise it would have been created) and yet was not there until it was chosen.

The search for truth and therefore freedom is a movement of increasing inwardness. Only that which is related to the self can be actually true for the self. It is not an objective truth, outside the self, but a subjective one. For Kierkegaard subjectivity is truth, and the highest truth for an individual is an 'objective uncertainty' which is faith. To attain such a truth that enables the individual to 'exist' and to overcome the dread of life's uncertainty, i.e. to become free, the individual must first become subjective. He must choose himself through angst and despair. The greatest leap he can take is a leap into faith.

In the opening pages of the novel, Frisch readily explores these existentialist notions of the self, freedom, subjectivity, as well as religious faith, through his inclusion of two citations from Kierkegaard's momentous philosophical tome *Either/Or*. Firstly:

Sieh, darum ist es so schwer, sich selbst zu wählen, weil in dieser Wahl die absolute Isolation mit der tiefsten Kontinuität identisch ist, weil durch sie jede Möglichkeit, etwas anderes zu werden, vielmehr sich in etwas anderes umzudichten, unbedingt ausgeschlossen wird.⁴²

And secondly:

– : indem die Leidenschaft der Freiheit in ihm erwacht (und sie erwacht in der Wahl, weil sie sich in der Wahl selber voraussetzt), wählt er sich selbst und kämpft um diesen Besitz als um seine Seligkeit, und das ist seine Seligkeit.⁴³

Frisch's two Kierkegaard mottos are taken from the second volume of *Either/Or*, in which a certain Judge Vilhelm is deliberating the cure for the 'aesthetic' way of life – the unrevealed life which is empty and meaningless. Judge Vilhelm locates the solution in the act of choosing, by which the individual *creates* himself (as, for instance, the protagonist Andri, in *Andorra* is unable to do). By making this choice, the deeper, ethical level of the personality is able to surface. Any failure to choose (as is the case with Herr Kurmann in *Biografie: ein Spiel*) or allowing others to choose on the individual's behalf means to lose one's personality entirely. As John M. Michelsen affirms, Kierkegaard's underlying assertion here is that 'the ethical dimension of life properly speaking has to grow out of the aesthetical [...] and – more specifically – the transition from the lower to the higher stage has to be motivated by an existentialist failure on the aesthetic plane'.⁴⁴

The precise significance of these quotations in the opening pages of *Stiller* is not immediately obvious. Towards the end of the novel the reader discovers how public prosecutor Rolf gave Stiller/White a volume by Kierkegaard – 'auf Grund eines Gesprächs über die Schwermut als Symptom der ästhetischen Haltung gegenüber dem Leben' (ST: 296), which evokes Judge Vilhelm's discussion in *Either/Or*

⁴² Max Frisch, *Stiller* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1954), p. 7; subsequently abbreviated as ST.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ John M. Michelsen, 'Kierkegaard's Stages on Life's Way: How Many Are There?' in *Writing the Politics of Difference*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 43-53, p. 47.

regarding an 'aesthetic' existence.⁴⁵ From this perspective we may associate Stiller, the failed sculptor, with such an aesthetic attitude, while Rolf's professional affinity with Kierkegaard's pseudonymous Judge Vilhelm would place him in a position comparable to Judge Vilhelm's. The connection between Judge Vilhelm and Rolf is further reinforced by the latter's notions of active resignation and self-acceptance (*das Sichabfinden*), which mirror Judge Vilhelm's insistence on the individual's choice. As Rolf explains:

Man ergibt sich, man kehrt zurück, um sich zu ergeben, aber man ergibt sich nie ein für allemal. Dann, wer weiß, wäre es auch nur ein schlappe Resignation, nichts weiter, ein Sichabfinden, das Ergebnis davon irgendeine Art Spießigkeit. Du zitterst, hast du gesagt. Zittere! Du weißt schon, wie ich das meine. (ST: 316)

As the above citation indicates, the individual must experience angst and despair before he can choose. 'Zittere!' Rolf thus says to Stiller, referring to his despair at his own weakness. What he means precisely is left to the reader to infer: Stiller has been reading the volume of Kierkegaard given to him by Rolf. Stiller does despair, but clearly not deeply enough, and he has resigned, but not once and for all. Here we observe Kierkegaard's distinction between passive, finite resignation and positive, infinite resignation. Even before he has read Kierkegaard, Stiller knows that his despair is not intense enough and he uses the word in the literal sense of not hoping: 'Ich bin nicht hoffnungslos genug, oder wie die Gläubigen sagen würden, nicht ergeben genug. Ich höre sie sagen: Ergib dich, und du bist frei' (ST:). Rolf acknowledges that the individual suffers from self-alienation because we are subject to intense conflict between our consciousness and emotional lives, 'making the latter incapable of living up to the image of ourselves generated by the former'.⁴⁶ Emulating the first of the two Kierkegaard citations that introduce Frisch's novel, Rolf affirms that a true attempt to strive towards one's self requires firstly identifying who we really are (our emotional selves), and secondly, accepting this

⁴⁵ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, p. 185ff.

⁴⁶ Leonardo F. Lisi, 'Kierkegaard and Modern European Literature' in *The Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard*, ed. John Lippitt & George Pattison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 550-569, p. 558.

self in a way that is more than mere resignation. For Rolf this means that Stiller's *Sichabfinden* must be founded on faith in God as the absolute patron of his true self: 'immer wieder hast du versucht, dich selbst anzunehmen, ohne etwas wie Gott anzunehmen. Und nun erweist sich das als Unmöglichkeit. Er ist die Kraft, die dir helfen kann, dich selbst anzunehmen [...]. Und trotzdem sagst du, daß du nicht beten kannst' (ST: 325). This position unmistakably echoes passages in *Either/Or* where Judge Vilhelm describes the act of choice as that in which we will our empirical characteristics and look upon them as both a gift and a task from God, i.e. the one who chooses him or herself in the right way 'chooses the absolute from the hand of the eternal God'.⁴⁷ Rolf's guidance is similarly redolent of Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death*, where faith is defined as both an infinite passage to become what we are, and secondly, the willingness to become ourselves before God: 'Faith is: that the self in being itself and in willing to be itself is grounded transparently in God'.⁴⁸ Stiller is reluctant to accept this position, and even at the end of the novel he fails to achieve happiness despite having accepted the actuality forced upon him. Rolf subsequently interprets this as his failure to proceed to the religious grounding of the self that makes the ethical more than a merely regulative ideal.

Pertinent to note here is that, in the midst of Frisch's deliberations on the self and personal identity, he is also probing matters of faith and conviction. W. G. Cunliffe also speaks of this 'sturdy missionary purpose,' which he considers to be somewhat alien considering 'the deliberate inconclusiveness that marks the ending [of the novel]'.⁴⁹ As such, Frisch's religious explorations ultimately serve to underscore the inherent contradiction involved in the idea of God, and similarly indicate how religious faith is incapable of 'saving' Stiller from his existentialist despair. This 'inconclusiveness,' as termed by Cunliffe, is explored sympathetically by Kierkegaard, who in *The Sickness unto Death* depicts a state of mind that is:

[...] despair about the eternal or over oneself [...]. The despairer [in this case Stiller] understands that it is weakness to take the earthly so much to heart,

⁴⁷ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, p. 217.

⁴⁸ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 132.

⁴⁹ W.G. Cunliffe, 'Existentialist Elements in Frisch's Works,' in *Monatshefte* 62 (1970), pp. 113-122, p. 120.

that it is weakness to despair. But then, instead of veering sharply from despair to faith, humbling himself before God for his weakness, he is more deeply absorbed in despair and despairs over his weakness.⁵⁰

Rolf appears to mirror this analysis in his summary of Stiller's angst-ridden dilemma: 'Du klammerst dich an deine Ohnmacht, die du für deine Persönlichkeit hältst, und dabei kennst du deine Ohnmacht so genau – und all dies wie aus Trotz, nur weil du nicht die Kraft bist' (ST: 325). Stiller's situation functions as a near mirror image of Kierkegaard's portrayal. He is immobile, hopeless, overcome by existential angst, yet essentially unable to take a leap of faith. Stiller has been drinking heavily when Rolf discovers him in an unheated living room in the early hours of the morning (ST: 314-15). Here Rolf attempts to coax him into a conversation about his love for Julika, –'Julika ist dein Leben geworden, Stiller [...] du liebst sie!' (ST: 316) – although he demonstrates little confidence in his ability to revive Stiller from his existential grief: 'Ich hatte, wie gesagt, nie erwartet, daß Stiller mir zuhörte, sondern geredet, nur um vor seinem Weinen nicht sein stummer Zuschauer zu sein' (ST: 324). It is namely in Rolf's parting words in which the novel's fundamental religious ambiguity is most clearly exemplified: 'Es macht dich stutzig, daß du selber noch darum flehen mußt, glauben zu können; dann hast du einfach Angst, Gott sei deine Erfindung' (ST: 325).

As is characteristic of this great Swiss writer, Frisch offers no immediate answers, but redirects the question towards us as readers. Whether Stiller succeeds in overcoming the dread of life's uncertainty to become a fully liberated cypher of Being is left for us to deliberate and judge. If we briefly recall a citation from Frisch's 1984 interview with Jodi Daynard, which he gave in English; 'To defend myself, I will say that that was one of the very few times when I seriously tried to find out whether I could become religious or not. [...] And as my other books showed, I couldn't retain it. I had started to read Kierkegaard because of this great feeling' – one might assert that the novel's religious ambiguity could be read autobiographically. Whatever the conclusion, Frisch incites his readers to contemplate the role of religious faith as a remedy to existentialist angst.

⁵⁰ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness*, p. 97ff.

SARTREAN AND HEIDEGGERIAN EXISTENTIALISM IN *STILLER*

It is perhaps not coincidental that, much like Frisch's fictitious protagonist Stiller, the real life philosopher Sartre is to be found exploring the notions of self and being, and the search for one's self, which has come to be labelled as 'identity,' despite the fact that this act of searching is sometimes viewed as identity-denial, or the non-compliance with one's 'true' identity. As Dorothea Wildenburg justly notes in the introduction to her study of Sartre: "‘Ich bin nicht Stiller’, beginnt der Roman *Stiller* von Max Frisch. ‘Ich bin nicht Sartre’ könnte der Titel einer Biographie Sartres lauten'.⁵¹ Surprising parallels can be drawn between the French philosopher and Frisch's 1954 novel, beginning with the interlinking themes of freedom and ontological guilt, which manifest themselves in Stiller and Julika's relationship.

As has been outlined above, the marriage between Stiller and Julika is an unhealthy partnership founded upon mutual self-reproach. In Sartre's post-war essay 'Existentialism is a Humanism,' he explains that freedom, which is essential to the being of each individual, entails moral responsibility and the freedom of everyone else: 'Obviously' Sartre writes, 'freedom as the definition of a man does not depend upon others, but as soon as there is a commitment, I am obliged to will the liberty of others at the same time as mine. I cannot make liberty my aim unless I make that of others equally my aim'.⁵² The question of freedom and mutual co-dependency posed in Frisch's novel is similarly reminiscent of Sartre's momentous claim 'L'enfer, c'est les autres' in *Huis Clos*. For Sartre hell, like paradise, can only come to men through men. All worldly hindrances, such as illness, poverty, incarceration, inasmuch as they appear to be natural, are neither good nor bad, but are intended to be defeated. By contrast there is a veritable and absolute evil, which is the bad will of the individual who seeks to harm another being. And human nature

⁵¹ Dorothea Wildenburg, *Jean-Paul Sartre* (Frankfurt a/M: Campus, 2004), p. 15.

⁵² Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Existentialism is a Humanism', in *European Existentialism*, ed. Nino Langiulli (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1997), pp. 391-419, p. 412.

is such that each man, in a sense, is an enemy to other men due to the very fact that he coexists with them and wants to posit himself as consciousness and as freedom, seeing Others only as objects. This state of being can be overcome through friendship and trust, but as soon as men (as in the example of Stiller and Julika) refuse friendship and trust their coexistence becomes insufferable. Sartre expands this discussion in *Being and Nothingness* by describing a feeling of ontological guilt that derives from the individual's treatment of Others as objects. By recognising oneself as not-being the Other, the individual can recognise the Other as related to his or her freedom and as capable of being limited by his or her own possibilities. As such, the Other becomes a 'transcendence-transcended,' an object in the world, which evokes the master-slave dialectic.⁵³ He goes on: 'I shall never touch the Other save in his being-as-object'. In this way, although Sartre admits that we may provide the Other with opportunities to reveal his freedom, he simultaneously denies that we ever help to increase that freedom. Our fundamental guilt can be seen as man's shameful inability to overcome his or her misuse of other people, and it is at this juncture that thematic parallels to *Stiller*, specifically the strained relationship between Stiller and Julika, become increasingly apparent. It is ultimately Rolf who acknowledges Stiller and Julika's mutual ontological guilt in the following passage:

'Es ist ja doch unser Leben, was da schiefgegangen ist. Unser allereigenstes und einmaliges Leben. Und dann' – Stiller hatte mich unterbrechen wollen; doch als ich schwieg, schwieg auch er. 'Ich weiß nicht' sagte ich, 'was du unter Schuld verstehst. Jedenfalls bist du soweit, sie nicht mehr bei andern zu suchen. Aber vielleicht, ich weiß nicht, meinst du, sie hätte sich vermeiden lassen. Schuld als eine Summe von eigenen Fehlern, die man hätte vermeiden können, meinst du es so? Ich glaube allerdings, die Schuld ist etwas anderes. Die Schuld sind wir selbst.' (ST: 319)

Inverting Sartre's 'Hell is the Others' to make 'Guilt are we Ourselves', Frisch imparts here that, in the act of denying the other individual's striving for existential freedom (in this case Julika's), his protagonist Stiller has denied himself the

⁵³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (London: Routledge, 1958), p. 536.

potential for freedom. This is evident in Stiller's patent indifference towards his wife's work as a ballerina, which, according to Jurgensen, represents her 'einzige Möglichkeit der Selbstgestaltung'. Stiller similarly accuses his wife of frigidity and sexual aloofness, when she in fact enjoys the sensual thrill of unknown eyes on her body. Julika is ontologically guilty of denying her husband's augmentation of personal freedom, for instance her aversion to sexual contact leaves Stiller feeling emasculated and pathetic, engendering insecurities which readily juxtapose the image of strength, dominance and 'manliness' he seeks to expose in his various roles, for example as a soldier fighting in the Spanish Civil War, or as a hero who rescues a woman from a burning sawmill. Existentialist freedom in the Sartrean sense is thus fundamentally unachievable due to Stiller and Julika's mutual projecting of false images onto one another, which thereby obstructs the Other's extension and enrichment of individual freedom. It is only towards the very end of the novel, when Julika is in the advanced stages of her illness, that Stiller begins to comprehend his feelings of ontological guilt: 'Sie hat gewartet. Hörst du? Auf meine Einsicht gewartet [...], vierzehn Jahre lang. Drum ist sie erschöpft, [...] Ich habe sie kaputt gemacht [...]. Ich habe sie gedemütigt' (ST: 318). By projecting false images onto his wife, he has failed to understand her, thus denying her freedom. Essentially it is within this ontological framework that Stiller and Julika, having both treated each other as objects, are shown to be victims of Sartrean guilt.

In addition to the thematic overlap between *Stiller* and *Huis Clos*, the harsh contingences that characterise the world of the principle male and female protagonists in Sartre's 1943 screenplay *Les jeux sont faits* can also be seen echoed in Frisch's 1954 novel, most markedly through the Swiss writer's thematising such notions as second chances, individual choice and freedom in a fundamentally *absurd* world. Sartre first illustrates these concepts through his protagonists Pierre and Ève, whose projects in life backfired and resulted in their death. Reminiscent of Stiller's and Julika's predicament following Stiller's release from incarceration, Pierre and Ève are awarded a second chance at life on the condition that they make their love honest and real: they return to life with the knowledge they gained in death to try again. After his death, Pierre is convinced that his work is complete: the insurrection he has been preparing for will be a success, and his actions will have the meaning he intended them to have. Similarly Stiller, having been granted his 'freedom' by the

court, believes he will be able to seamlessly resume his former life with his wife Julika. Theoretically, nothing can go wrong.⁵⁴ Sartre's Pierre believes that the future meaning of his life will be assured by his past actions, yet through being dead he discovers that he no longer has a role to play in the determination of meaning. He has in fact completely misunderstood: the insurrection will fail, his relationship with Ève is unsalvageable, and his efforts will prove to have been pointless. Rather than a heroic leader who died on the eve of his greatest triumph, he will be remembered as a failure whose labours were in vain. The term 'les jeux sont faits', from which Sartre's script takes its title, refers to the moment in, for instance, a game of roulette when bets have been placed and it is too late to retract them, but the spin of the wheel has not yet determined who will win or lose. It is a moment of uncertainty: decisions have been taken, but their consequences remain unknown. Because Pierre and Stiller have both envisaged and planned their respective 'insurrections', they are convinced of their success. They both believe that they control the meaning of their actions because their successes will flow directly from their choices, yet neither Pierre nor Stiller can ultimately determine the significance that will be attached to their lives. Their freely taken decisions set up a chain of events in which they are not free to intervene, and to which they are not free to give the meaning they might desire. What fundamentally distinguishes Sartre and Frisch in this regard is Sartre's application of death as a thematic structure, for Stiller, unlike Pierre, never encounters death in the novel. What nevertheless unites the two works is the underlying premise that second chances and alternative outcomes cannot be modelled in the form of individual desires. There is no second chance for the dead, as there is none for the living. The individual may well be condemned to freedom, in Sartre's words, but this does not mean that one can simply do whatever he or she wants. The incarcerated Stiller was not free to leave the prison, for instance. He was free to exercise a plan of escape or work for his release, but there was never any guarantee that his project would succeed. In this regard, Sartrean freedom is a far cry from the promise that desire can be realised, and in *Les jeux sont faits*, as in *Stiller*, Pierre, Ève, Stiller and Julika each learn that inscrutable contingency rather than benevolent destiny causes their projects to falter. As Sartre explains in *Being and Nothingness*: 'That means that, for them, the chips are down and they will now

⁵⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Les jeux sont faits* (London: Methuen, 1956), p. 41.

undergo their changes without being at all responsible for them'.⁵⁵ For each of these characters, freedom is a terrible given and a doomed undertaking. The second chance is missed as surely as the first one, the insurgency is as certain to fail as is their love.

Further Sartrean elements are located similarly in Frisch's general deliberations on the themes of identity negation and the fugitive nature of the 'I.' "Ich bin nicht Stiller!" (ST: 9-14) reflects in novelistic prose such key tenets of Sartre's philosophy as the inability to define one's liberty in a world of social and intellectual constraint:

Denn ohne Whisky, ich hab's ja erfahren, bin ich nicht ich selbst, sondern neige dazu, allen möglichen guten Einflüssen zu erliegen und eine Rolle zu spielen, die ihnen so passen möchte, aber nichts mit mir zu tun hat, und da es jetzt in meiner unsinnigen Lage (sie halten mich für einen verschollenen Bürger ihrer Städtchens!) einzig und allein darum geht, mich nicht beschwatzen zu lassen und auf der Hut zu sein gegenüber allen ihren freundlichen Versuchen, mich in eine fremde Haut zu stecken, unbestechlich zu sein bis zur Grobheit, ich sage: da es jetzt einzig und allein darum geht, niemand anders zu sein als der Mensch, der ich in Wahrheit leider bin [...] (ST: 9)

The 'I' of the 'I'm not Stiller' unifies and binds together an experience and a denial of a person in the world. This 'I' does not refer to an isolated subject but, rather, expresses the consciousness and the presence of a person called Stiller. The 'I' expresses too that, at the every day level, the conviction that inside the skin of this person 'called' Stiller is a real person who is not Stiller. In saying 'I' the person, in every case, is referring to himself – to a particular, real person located in the here and now of the world. However, the real person is always just out of reach, always just ahead of the person, or located somewhere in the distant or not so distant past. Searching to find himself in the present, the person is always at a loss. The 'whoness' of the person, the 'who' of the 'who am I' always lies out of immediate reach.

⁵⁵ Sartre, *Being*, pp. 601.

In a fugitive way, the person tries to catch himself through this fleeting ‘I.’

Commenting on related themes in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre writes:

The world by nature is *mine* in so far as it is the correlative in-itself of nothingness [...]. Without the world there is no selfness, no person; without selfness, without the person, there is no world [...]. It would be absurd to say that the world as it is known is known as mine. Yet this quality of ‘my-ness’ in the world is a fugitive structure, always present, a structure which I *live*. The world is mine because it is haunted by possibilities, and the consciousness of each of these is a possible self-consciousness which I *am*. It is these possibles as such which give the world its unity and its meaning as the world.⁵⁶

Sartre maintains that in *ipséité* (or ‘self-ness’) the individual becomes present not only to the identity that he or she *is*, but also to the identity that *he or she could be*. As is also evidently the case in *Stiller*, the individual understands him or herself *in* relation to a past or future identity that cannot be adequately derived from or determined by who he or she currently *is*, i.e. Jim White / smuggler / soldier / artist / wife murderer / rescuer of women from burning sawmills. The individual’s being is to be present to what it is (through consciousness), and present-yet-absent to what one could be but is not yet (through *ipséité*). Just as consciousness in the very structure of its being *refers to* an identity it denies, it also refers to a possible future identity. Sartre also writes in *The Transcendence of the Ego*: ‘The self, the “I”, is not a thing but, rather, a process that unifies the streams of thoughts and experiences the person has about himself around a single pole or point of reference’,⁵⁷ a viewpoint which again neatly correlates with the fundamental instability and fluidity of human identity which is experienced by Frisch’s protagonist in the novel.

Pursuing this discussion of the ‘fugitive nature of the self’ in *Stiller*, one can also draw links to Heidegger’s philosophical meditations, as outlined in *Sein und Zeit*. According to Heidegger, the individual has fallen into the world and ‘flees’ in the

⁵⁶ Sartre, *Being*, pp. 103-4.

⁵⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, trans. Forrest Williams & Robert Kirkpatrick (New York: Noonday Press, 1957), p. 60.

face of him or herself into the ‘they’,⁵⁸ which represents the so-called ‘publicness’ (*Öffentlichkeit*) of *Dasein*. Heidegger insists that when the ‘I’ talks in the *natural*, inauthentic way, this is performed by the they-self or, to employ Heideggerian terminology, *das Man* or *das Neutrum*.⁵⁹ This alludes to when the individual accepts expectations and interpretations and allows his or her world to be structured by them. C. Agustín Corti describes: ‘Dem Man geht es als Seinsart der Alltäglichkeit nicht um sein Selbst, sondern um die Durchschnittlichkeit der Existenz’.⁶⁰ Heidegger explains this mode of inauthentic being in the following passage:

In der Benutzung öffentlicher Verkehrsmittel, in der Verwendung des Nachrichtenwesens ist jeder Andere wie der Andere. Dieses Miteinandersein löst das eigene Dasein völlig in die Seinsart ‘der Anderen’ auf, so zwar, dass die Anderen in ihrer Unterschiedlichkeit und Ausdrücklichkeit noch nicht verschwinden. In dieser Unauffälligkeit und Nichtfeststellbarkeit entfaltet das Man seine eigentliche Diktatur. Wir genießen und vergnügen uns, wie man genießt; wir lesen, sehen und urteilen über Literatur und Kunst, wie man sieht und urteilt; wir ziehen uns aber auch vom ‘großen Haufen’ zurück, wie man sich zurückzieht; wir finden ‘empörend’, was man empörend findet. Das Man, das kein bestimmtes ist und das Alle, obzwar nicht als Summe, sind, schreibt die Seinsart des Alltäglichen vor.⁶¹

Thus, what expresses itself in the ‘I’ is the self which, proximally and for the most part, the individual is *not* authentically. Essentially the individual loses him- or herself and becomes self-forgetful (Heidegger speaks of *Seinsvergessenheit*), surrendering him or herself to its practises and to the practical scrutiny of *das Man*. The ‘they,’ those indefinite others of the social world, of whom one is a part, enter into the individual’s idle talk, repartee and everyday discourse.⁶² The individual hides within this discourse, fleeing and seeking to find his- or herself in such talk and in those practises he or she shares with others. It is arguably this inauthentic

⁵⁸ For a more comprehensive explanation of the concept of the ‘they-self’, cf.: Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 127ff.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 126.

⁶⁰ C. Agustín Corti, *Zeitproblematik bei Martin Heidegger und Augustinus* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), p. 79.

⁶¹ Heidegger, *ibid.* pp. 126-7.

⁶² Ibid.

state of being as outlined by Heidegger which accounts for Stiller's existentialist crisis that precedes the opening of the novel, through whose narrative the reader learns of the protagonist's physical and, evidently, mental flight from 'die öffentliche Wir-Welt'⁶³ as experienced by *das Man*, to use Heideggerian terminology. It is also perhaps this inauthentic state of being to which the protagonist is forced to return after he is convicted of being Stiller, whereupon he resumes his 'they-existence' as before, living together with his wife Julika in marital disharmony. Beneath this 'natural "I",' however, Heidegger speaks of another 'I', a phenomenological 'I', namely, one which exists alongside the everyday 'I' and constitutes the 'I' of the moral being. It is the 'I' of the person who feels, has feelings, feels oneself feeling, and possesses dignity, self-respect, responsibility, and an inherent sense of moral worth. Moral self-consciousness is at the core of this person, which evokes the validity and legitimacy felt by Stiller when playing different roles. For instance, in his role as an adventurer and romancer of the biracial American woman, Florence (ST 142-47), Stiller is projecting his wish for a passionate relationship with an erotically desirable, healthy woman who dances in an uninhibited way – 'ich träumte von ihr, gewiß, die wildesten Träume; [...] Florence tanzte noch immer allein; [...]; dazu machte Florence eine so königliche Gebärde mit dem Arm, [...] und landete auf dem Parkett wie ein Vogel ohne Schwere' (ST: 142-3), thus representing an antithesis to his wife Julika, who he thinks of as a cold sea beast. As this passage indicates, beneath the surface of Stiller's inauthentic 'they-existence,' he has the capacity of being, as Heidegger describes, a self-respecting, passionate, sensitive and emotionally involved being, who differs radically from his distant, aloof and socially introverted 'natural' state, as revealed in the following passage: 'wenn er [Stiller] so brütete, untätig wie ein Lahmer und verstockt und schweigsam [...], menschenscheu, lustlos, gleichgültig, willenslos' (ST: 86). Frisch's differentiation between his protagonist's natural and non-natural self, or, expressed otherwise, between his inauthentic and authentic existence, reflects the existentialist thematic overlap with this side of Heideggerian philosophy.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 65.

Based on the above discussions of the echoes of Kierkegaardian, Sartrean and Heideggerian existentialist thinking in Frisch's *Stiller*, the question is not whether or not, but rather the degree to which, these existentialist concepts manifest themselves in Frisch's writing. Because it is so difficult to establish, this remains heavily contested in Frisch scholarship. Whilst scholars such as Steffen Steffensen, continue to evince that Frisch's literary works have evolved from an intense examination of Kierkegaard's work,⁶⁴ others remain more sceptical. Hans Mayer, for instance, contends that the purported links between Frisch's theme of 'Reproduktion' and Kierkegaard's 'Wiederholung' ('*Gentagelse*') maxim are implausible; he speaks instead of 'einem ironischen Spannungsverhältnis zwischen Kierkegaardmotto und Romanverlauf [...]'.⁶⁵ Kerstin Gühne-Engelmann reaches a similar conclusion and maintains that links to Kierkegaard's philosophy can be perceived only in the very early phases of the novel. Drawing attention to 'der unreligiösen Haltung Frischs [...], welche sich vom christlichen Weltbild Kierkegaard absetzt', she continues:

Als Fazit ist daher zu ziehen, dass Frisch mit Kierkegaard in der Diagnose des ästhetischen Lebens, seiner Komponenten und Gefahren übereinstimmt. Die Lösung Kierkegaards, sein sogenanntes drittes, das religiöse Stadium, jedoch ist für Frisch keine Lösung, die er annehmen und umsetzen kann.⁶⁶

In this particular regard, the validity of Gühne-Engelmann's assertion regarding Frisch's interweaving of Kierkegaardian themes is largely dependent on one's interpretation of the 'religious dimension' in the novel. Whereas Gühne-Engelmann notes a veering away from a Christian stance, Wolfgang Stemmler emphasises a lack of definitiveness regarding the novel's religious position and believes Frisch

⁶⁴ Cf. Josef Imbach, 'Entfremdung als Identitäts- und Transzendenzverlust. Kierkegaard als Schlüssel für eine theologische Interpretation von Max Frischs Roman "Stiller"', in *Geist und Leben* 52 (Würzburg: Echter, 1979), pp. 133-46.

⁶⁵ Hans Mayer, *Dürrenmatt und Frisch: Anmerkungen* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1963), p. 49.

⁶⁶ Kerstin Gühne-Engelmann (1994), *Die Thematik des versäumten Lebens im Prosawerk Max Frischs*, Ph.D Thesis, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität zu Freiburg, p. 131.

structured it to embrace the possibility of spirituality as a response to existentialist anguish; he remarks:

Offen bleibt aber auch am Ende, ob er [Stiller] später die Kraft gefunden hat, durch das Einbekenntnis seiner Schuld sich in sich selbst und in Gott zurück zu reuen, um in christlichem Existenzverständnis endlich zu sich selbst zu finden. Der Roman endet, wie alle Werke Frischs, mit einer Frage.⁶⁷

An interview between Frisch and Jodi Daynard from September 1984, twelve years after Stemmler outlined this notion in his 1972 doctoral thesis, would appear to validate his position regarding the novel's intended open-endedness and religious capaciousness. When questioned by Daynard about his engagement with Kierkegaard, Frisch explained in this discussion given in English how his reading the Danish philosopher awakened in him a personal spiritual dilemma, although it never resulted in a conventionally Kierkegaardian 'leap of faith' (or '*Troens Spring*')

I wouldn't go as far [sic] to say the whole religious element in the book [Stiller] is not honest, but it's rather an influence I had at the time from reading Kierkegaard, and it was more a reading experience than a real one. I tried to live up a little bit to something – I don't know what [...]. To defend myself, I will say that that was one of the very few times when I seriously tried to find out whether I could become religious or not. I was trying it out, you know. And as my other books showed, I couldn't retain it. I had started to read Kierkegaard because of this great feeling.⁶⁸

The significance of this statement lies in how it reveals Frisch's willingness to embrace the possibility of religious belief. Equally significant is his apparent echoing of this position in *Stiller*, whereby no definitive conclusion is reached as to whether Stiller is able to embrace God as a saviour or not. The interview affirms that

⁶⁷ Wolfgang Stemmler (1972), *Max Frisch, Heinrich Böll und Sören Kierkegaard*, Ph.D Thesis, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich, p. 76.

⁶⁸ Interview between Max Frisch and Jodi Daynard, Sept. 1984, in *The Art of Fiction, The Paris Review* 113.2 (1989), p. 77.

Stemmler was correct to acknowledge the novel's ethical-religious dimension and its deliberate inconclusiveness vis-à-vis the existence-of-God question. Stemmler goes on to conclude, however, that these are not definitively Kierkegaardian traces, but rather that they could refer to any number of philosophers or philosophical movements. He readily acknowledges for instance that Frisch's 'Arabeske' motif, which reverts back, amongst other works, to *Don Juan oder die Liebe zur Geometrie* (1952), is not unambiguous proof of this purported philosophical relationship to Kierkegaard, as the crucial link between sensuality and Christian morality, which is a typical element of any Kierkegaardian exegesis, is essentially lacking in this novel.

Other critics simply deny the general philosophical potential in Frisch's works and attribute the misreading of works of literature to the adherence to and insistence on longstanding thought patterns. Regina Sedekerskyte thus contends: 'Einer der wichtigsten Gründe der Missdeutung oder des Nicht-verstehen-könnens eines literarischen Texte ist [...] das Verharren auf den alten Denkmustern und das Nichtwollen, anders zu sehen'.⁶⁹ Walter Schmitz labels Frisch's intellectual involvement with existentialism as a mere 'Plagiatprofil', for no 'präzise Rezeption' takes place. For Schmitz, it is rather a case that 'umstrittene Konzepte [werden] übernommen und in das literarische Experiment Max Frischs eingeführt'⁷⁰ without any substantive theoretical engagement. Marcel Reich-Ranicki similarly conveys doubts regarding the alleged philosophical dimensions in Frisch's literary oeuvre, affirming that Frisch is a mere storyteller, *not* a philosopher:

Frisch ist kein Philosoph, auch wenn er sich gern auf Kierkegaard und andere Denker beruft. Er ist ein Erzähler und Stückeschreiber. So scheint es mir auch müßig, ihm, wie das häufig geschieht, nachzusagen, seine Kernfragen zielten auf das Zentrum unserer Existenz. Sie haben eine andere, eine vornehmlich schriftstellerisch-handwerkliche Funktion: Es sind Vorwände [...]. Wir haben es also mit Gedankenspielen zu tun. Sie sollen die

⁶⁹ Regina Sedekerskyte, *Schuld- und Zeitbewusstsein im Spätwerk von Max Frisch aus existentieller Sicht* (Bergen: Germanistisches Institut der Universität Bergen, 1999), p. 7.

⁷⁰ Walter Schmitz, 'Philosophie als "Plagiatprofil": Wissen und Erkenntnisgrenzen der Literatur im Werk Max Frischs', in *Germanica* 48, 2011, pp. 55-74, pp. 62-3.

mit den Mitteln des Epikers oder Dramatikers erteilten Antworten ermöglichen – und nur auf diese kam und kommt es an.⁷¹

There is some merit in these observations; indeed, Frisch was never explicit about precisely which of Kierkegaard's works he read, nor has he ever confirmed precisely when and in what context Kierkegaard first caught his attention. His letters and diaries also fail to provide any exact information. Any reflections on typical Kierkegaardian themes – such as choice, freedom, and the self – appear only in an isolated manner. Furthermore, except where Frisch cites verbatim from Kierkegaard in the epigraph to *Stiller*, it is virtually impossible to conclude definitely whether the thematic correspondences really are allusions to Kierkegaard, or whether it is only a case of Frisch engaging with issues that are central for existentialist philosophy from Fichte to Kierkegaard to Sartre.⁷² Regardless of such issues of provenance, what is more significant is what a writer like Frisch actually does with such references – specifically, how they are transformed into his literary thought. In this context, Frisch revealed that for him the most important texts were those that aroused opposition, rather than demanded acquiescence; he observes in his diary:

Die anderen Bücher, die uns mit unseren eigenen Gedanken beschenken, sind mindestens die höflicheren; vielleicht auch die eigentlich wirksamen. Sie führen uns in den Wald, wo sich die Wege in Sträuchern und Beeren verlaufen, und wenn wir unsere Taschen gefüllt sehen, glauben wir durchaus, dass wir die Beeren selber gefunden haben.⁷³

Surely this observation can notably be applied to Kierkegaard's works. Essentially it is only from isolated comments such as these that one can speculate about the nature of Frisch's relationship to Kierkegaardian philosophy. The earliest trace that circuitously links Frisch to Kierkegaard is a comment made in a letter first published in 1960 from Dürrenmatt to Frisch. Here Dürrenmatt offers an interpretation of

⁷¹ Marcel Reich-Ranicki, 'Ein ungedeckter Scheck', in *Max Frisch: Aufsätze* (Zurich: Ammann, 1991), pp. 91-97, p. 92.

⁷² Sophie Wenerscheid, 'Max Frisch: Literary Transformations of Identity', in *Kierkegaard's Influence on Literature, Criticism and Art: Tome I: The Germanophone World*, ed. Jon Stewart (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 79-90, p. 80.

⁷³ Frisch, *Tagebuch 1946-1949*, p. 105.

Frisch's early drama *Graf Öderland*, in which the protagonist *Graf Öderland* is overwhelmed by the strictly bureaucratic world that surrounds him and starts murdering people out of desperation. In the letter Dürrenmatt contends that *Öderland* is an aesthete, and then directly references the Danish philosopher: 'Entschuldigen Sie, dass ich das, was ich das Ästhetische in seiner letzten Konsequenz nenne, nicht näher umschreibe, ich lehne mich hier an Kierkegaard an. Nehmen Sie das Ästhetische hier als das Nicht-Religiösabgründige'.⁷⁴ In the early 1950s Dürrenmatt had begun writing a doctoral thesis on *Das Tragische bei Kierkegaard*, which ratifies his engagement with the Danish existentialist. Dürrenmatt also remarked some years later, 'Ohne Kierkegaard bin ich als Schriftsteller nicht zu verstehen'.⁷⁵ It is precisely these sources that led Hans Bänziger to conclude that it was Dürrenmatt who initially introduced Frisch to Kierkegaardian philosophy.⁷⁶

Another incident which serves to confirm Frisch's early knowledge of and possible engagement with Kierkegaard is his stay in the United States from 1951-52, an experience which he termed as 'ein Jahr des bloßen Aufnehmens [...]', during which he '[las] mehr als sonst'.⁷⁷ In a letter to Peter Suhrkamp, Frisch discusses his work-in-progress on *Stiller* and cites Theodor Adorno's 1951 *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus einem beschädigten Leben*.⁷⁸

Ich habe viel entworfen, glaube bei aller Vorsicht sagen zu können, dass der Roman zustande kommt, er ist in der Gesamtanlage da, wichtige Teile sind auch schon geschrieben [...]. Ab und zu lese ich in den *Minima Moralia*, teilweise sehr fasziniert, dann wieder hängt es mich ab, vielleicht wie die Quintessenzen zu selten sich aus einem Beispiel ergeben. Halten sie mir den Daumen für den Roman, ohne Arbeit wird es schlimm werden, in jedem Fall ist es gut, dass ich außerhalb der Gewöhnung bin.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Max Frisch and Friedrich Dürrenmatt, *Briefwechsel: mit einem Essay des Herausgebers Peter Rüedi* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1998), p. 116.

⁷⁵ Friedrich Dürrenmatt, *Turmbau; Stoff IV-XX* (Diogenes: Zurich, 1990), p. 123.

⁷⁶ Hans Bänzinger, *Frisch und Dürrenmatt: Materialien und Kommentare* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1987), p. 54.

⁷⁷ Max Frisch Archive, Max Frisch an Peter Suhrkamp, New York, 16.12.51, p. 2

⁷⁸ Cf. Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus einem beschädigten Leben*, vol. 4 (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1980)

⁷⁹ Max Frisch Archive, Frisch an Suhrkamp, p. 2.

Frisch's allusion to Adorno's *Minima Moralia* is of note here, for, much like his letter correspondence with Dürrenmatt, it circuitously suggests Frisch's contact with Kierkegaardian philosophy. In 1933 Adorno wrote his post-doctoral dissertation 'Kierkegaard–Konstruktion des Ästhetischen';⁸⁰ hence it is unsurprising to find Adorno expound upon Kierkegaardian aestheticism in the later *Minima Moralia*, where he names the concepts 'das Schöne' and the 'Pantheons der Klassizität' examples of an 'idealistischen Kunstvorstellung'. Kierkegaard's existential teachings, characterised as a 'Zurücktreten des Einzelnen in sich selber' with a view to 'sich seiner Fülle habhaft zu werden', a key theme in *Stiller*, are classified by Adorno as bourgeois moralities.⁸¹

Other notable sources that serve to verify this engagement with existentialist thought are two comments Frisch made in the 1970s and 1980s. The first occurs in a letter exchange between the Swiss writer and his former Suhrkamp editor, Jürgen H. Petersen. In a letter dated 21 October 1978 Petersen asks Frisch to clarify the existentialist traces in *Mein Name sei Gantenbein*; he asks: '[...] Und in Zusammenhang mit "Gantenbein" und Möglichkeits-Problematik: Hat Heidegger oder existenzphilosophisches Denken – mittelbar oder unmittelbar – in Ihrem Umgang mit der Philosophie eine Rolle gespielt?' In his belated reply to Petersen of 28 February 1979, Frisch readily admits to having read Nietzsche in his youth, and insists that whilst his knowledge of existentialism is marginal, it may still have served as a direct creative impulse in his writing. He answers:

Lieber Herr Professor Petersen,
es tut mir leid, dass Sie ohne Antwort geblieben sind, und ich bitte Sie um Nachsicht. Die Fragen über die philosophischen Voraussetzungen kann ich ohnehin nie beantworten; freilich habe ich Nietzsche gelesen und als junger Mann mit großer Begeisterung, die Existentialphilosophie kenne ich vom

⁸⁰ Cf. Theodor W. Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Konstruktion des Ästhetischen* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1962)

⁸¹ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 83.

Rande her, aber das alles heisst nicht, dass sie nicht Einfluss gehabt haben.
Nur muss ich selber das wissen?⁸²

The second source is an interview between Frisch and the critic Volker Hage that was conducted in 1981. More than several decades after the publication of *Stiller*, Frisch continues to maintain that the creative process was ‘ein rasches Wegschreiben, ohne viel Überlegung’. Frisch also describes his astonishment at the subsequent interpretations of his literary work: ‘Als das Buch fertig war und es hieß, da gehe es doch um das Identitätsproblem... ja richtig! Aber das Wort Identität, das ich ja nun doch kannte, ist während der Arbeit an dem Roman gelöscht gewesen’.⁸³ As both citations illustrate, while Frisch may have been captivated by the existentialist concerns of identity and freedom, he exhibits genuine difficulty in recalling his philosophical influences, a fact that suggests that he had not sought to write his novel in accordance with any particular philosophical manifesto, existentialist or otherwise. Other than the above quotations which have been found in magazines and in the Max Frisch Archiv, there are no other known sources which serve to confirm a Kierkegaardian, Heideggerian, Nietzschean, Sartrean or Camusean philosophical agenda in any of Frisch’s three novels. In recalling Frisch’s response to Jürgen Petersen – ‘Nur muss ich selber das wissen?’ –, one is forced to conclude that even if the various strands and strains existentialist thinking that can be located in *Stiller*, *Homo Faber* and *Gantenbein*, most discernably those of Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Sartre, are consciously residual, they are part of an unconscious literary imagination, which is nonetheless remarkable and relevant.

FRISCH AND/AS EXISTENTIALIST: REFLECTIONS ON LITERARY CRITICISM

Any study on the existentialist dimension of Max Frisch’s literary oeuvre would not be complete without acknowledging the breadth of literary criticism surrounding this topic. Three pinnacle early studies of Frisch’s novels are Philip Manger’s

⁸² Max Frisch Archiv, Max Frisch an Jürgen H. Petersen, (JP an MF 21.10.1978 / MF an JP 28.2.1979), pp. 1-2.

⁸³ Interview between Max Frisch and Volker Hage, 30 August 1981, in *Max Frisch: Sein Leben in Bildern und Texten* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011), p. 217.

‘Kierkegaard in Max Frisch’s Novel “Stiller”’ (1966), Charles W. Hoffman’s ‘The Search for Self, Inner Freedom, and Relatedness in the Novels of Max Frisch’ (1967) and W. G. Cunliffe’s ‘Existentialist Elements in Frisch’s Works’ (1970).⁸⁴ Manger proceeds as if Frisch had written *Stiller* according to a Kierkegaardian programme, as a detailed demonstration of Kierkegaard’s view of the individual’s movement toward self and freedom. Whereas Manger presents Frisch more as a philosopher and less as a creative artist working with the tools and materials of everyday life, Hoffman examines Frisch’s themes in terms that are lacking philosophical focus. The themes Hoffman identifies are existential in origin, but are not pursued in existentialist terms. The notions of identity, freedom, and relatedness have come to represent common dilemmas in our time, for the obstacle to these ends have proliferated – technological enhancement has led to estrangement and isolation and restricts the occasions for self-determination. Thus one can muse over these issues beyond the confines of an existentialist framework. Hoffman’s approach to these problems in *Stiller*, *Homo Faber*, and *Gantenbein* is both helpful and enlightening, for it brings us close to the novels, casting the themes in terms of the actual day-to-day problems of the characters. In Hoffman’s view, the protagonists of the novels seek to be in touch with themselves and in touch with an inner freedom so that they might achieve, through self-discipline, a relatedness and harmony with others that can overcome their isolation. According to this approach, selfhood and freedom are seen more as means than as ends in themselves, and to this extent they are not really existential tropes. Cunliffe’s study, on the other hand, takes as its focus the existentialist elements in Frisch’s works and centres the work around Frisch’s thematic preoccupation with the Second Commandment ‘Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen.’ The study takes *Stiller* as its predominant focus and draws on a range of existentialist philosophers, such as Kierkegaard, Sartre and Camus, to explore Frisch’s treatment of the themes of authenticity, despair, choice, and the leap of faith. Cunliffe’s work is nevertheless interspersed with references to Frisch’s other novels and plays, where similar existentialist themes emerge. Other valuable

⁸⁴ Cf. Philip Manger, ‘Kierkegaard in Max Frisch’s Novel “Stiller,”’ *German Life and Letters* 20, 1966, pp. 119-31; Charles W. Hofmann, ‘The Search for Self, Inner Freedom and Relatedness in the Novels of Max Frisch,’ in *The Contemporary Novel in German: A Symposium*, ed. Robert R. Heitner. (Austin, TX.: University of Texas Press, 1967), pp. 91-113; W.G. Cunliffe, ‘Existentialist Elements in Frisch’s Works,’ in *Monatshefte* 62 (1970), pp. 113-22.

essays from Cunliffe on the subject of Max Frisch and existentialism include the afore-cited ‘Die Kunst, ohne Geschichte abzuschwimmen: Existenzialistisches Strukturprinzip in *Stiller*, *Homo Faber* und *Mein Name sei Gantenbein*’, which dedicates itself solely to the study of Frisch’s post-war trilogy.⁸⁵

Other early studies point more directly to the existential nature of Frisch’s thematic interest. In her 1965 study *Zum Problem der Identität im Werk Max Frischs*, Monika Wintsch-Spiess writes:

Unsere Ausführungen erhellen die am Anfang geäußerte Behauptung, es handele sich bei Max Frisch um ein zutiefst existentielles Problem, das sich dem denkenden modernen Menschen in einer ungesicherten, alles in Frage ziehenden Welt stelle.⁸⁶

As the title of the work suggests, Wintsch-Spiess identifies this existential problem as ‘das Problem der Identität’ and discusses several related themes over the course of four sub-chapters (‘Die Sehnsucht nach der Jugend’, ‘Der Fluch der Wiederholung’, ‘Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen’, ‘Die Sehnsucht nach dem “anderen Leben”’), all of which she relates specifically to the problem of identity. Despite Wintsch-Spiess’ limited discussion of the existential elements in Frisch’s plays, and an altogether lack of exploration of the existential themes in either *Gantenbein* or *Homo Faber*, Wintsch-Spiess’ analysis of the ‘vertiefte existentielle Problematik des Stiller’, which essentially forms the major thrust of her study, is nevertheless rigorous and comprehensive. In a similar way, Lusser-Mertelsmann’s 1976 study on Frisch, cited earlier, also investigates the ‘Ich-Problematik’ in his literary oeuvre but from a predominantly psychoanalytical perspective.⁸⁷ Rather than merely focussing her work on the ‘centricity’ of the self, Lusser-Mertelsmann integrates a myriad of aspects pertinent to the question of the self and analyses Frisch’s characters both from a psychoanalytic angle, as well as in relation to themselves and to society.

Kerstin Gühne-Engelmann’s 1994 doctoral thesis focuses predominantly on ‘Die Thematik des versäumten Lebens’ in Frisch’s *Stiller*, *Homo Faber* and *Gantenbein*.

⁸⁵ W. G. Cunliffe, ‘Die Kunst’, p. 103.

⁸⁶ Monika Wintsch-Spiess, *Zum Problem der Identität*, *ibid.*, p. 21.

⁸⁷ Lusser-Mertelsmann, *Max Frisch*, *ibid.*, p. 92.

It also probes in considerable depth Frisch's engagement with Kierkegaardian philosophy, and its traces in the novel *Stiller*.⁸⁸ Frederick Alfred Lubich's 1990 study *Max Frisch: Stiller, Homo Faber und Mein Name sei Gantenbein* has the Frisch 'trilogy' as its focus, although its emphasis is predominantly the texts' plot structure and narrative perspective, and, in the case of *Stiller*, the functions of Switzerland and America as a 'Gefängnis und Fluchtpunkt persönlicher Selbstverwirklichung'.⁸⁹ Erica Natale's study of 2000, entitled 'Rollendasein und verhindertes Erleben: Literatur und literarische Bezüge im Kontext des Stiller von Max Frisch'⁹⁰ likewise probes the issues of the self, identity and role-playing in Frisch's 1954 novel. Nedialka Bubner investigates in her 2005 study '[...] die Mechanismen des Wechselspiels und der gegenseitigen Determinanz zwischen Ich-Figuren [...] und einem fiktionalen Möglichkeitsraum [...]'; she restricts herself to a detailed investigation of *Bin oder Die Reise nach Peking* (1944), *Mein Name sei Gantenbein*, *Biografie: Ein Spiel* (1967) and *Montauk* (1975), and concludes that Frisch's novel essentially results in the abandonment of an identity based on the individual's life story in favour of the free roaming of individual imagination, 'wohlwissend, dass das Erreichen der höchsten Stufe der Selbsterkenntnis zugleich das Ende der Variabilität und des Spiels und ein zwangsläufiges Bekenntnis zum einzigen unaustauschbaren Selbst bedeutet'.⁹¹

These studies cover a total timespan of forty years; what is particularly notable about them is how they all, in one way or another, approach Frisch's literary oeuvre primarily from the standpoint of the existentialist issue of *Identitätsproblematik*. Some of them have isolated the specific societal obstacles that prevent identity formation or lead to the establishment of pseudo-identities. None of these studies, however, has attempted to come to terms with the specific existential values of freedom of choice, authenticity, angst, guilt, and individual responsibility and to trace these concepts through Frisch's novels. The unique qualities of the above chapter are thus its focus on the prototypical existentialist elements, such as

⁸⁸ Gühne-Engelmann, *Die Thematik des versäumten Lebens*, *ibid.*, p. 131.

⁸⁹ Frederick Alfred Lubich, *Max Frisch: Stiller, Homo Faber und Mein Name sei Gantenbein* (Munich: Fink, 1990), p. 23.

⁹⁰ Erica Natale, *Rollendasein und verhindertes Erleben: Literatur und literarische Bezüge im Kontext des Stiller von Max Frisch* (Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2000).

⁹¹ Nedialka Bubner, *Max Frisch* (Hamburg: Kovac, 2005), p. 21.

freedom, identity, authenticity and ontological guilt, as delineated in the previous methodological chapter, within the framework of Frisch's *Stiller*, and secondly, its location of not just Kierkegaardian, but also Heideggerian and Sartrean philosophical motifs, and their infiltration into and significance for his 1954 novel. As the letters and interviews clearly demonstrate, much of the existentialist thinking which features in Frisch's oeuvre can be seen to be unconscious and intuitive, for Frisch readily admits not to have approached the writing task with any particular philosophical or theoretical agenda. Identification of these philosophical influences is nevertheless illuminating, for it serves to reinforce the argumentation that underlies this thesis regarding the widespread dissemination and proliferation of existentialist ideas within literary thought in the decade or so following the Second World War.

* * *

In conclusion, Frisch's literary trademark clearly has become, to the exclusion of virtually any other theme, the problem of identity – a trademark to which he once replied sarcastically: 'Mein literarisches Warenzeichen, ich weiß, ist das Identitätsproblem. Dass ich mich mit dem Warenzeichen nicht identisch fühle, kommt noch hinzu'.⁹² It is perhaps not surprising that Frisch should respond this way, since the entire impetus of his writing is away from formulations, definitions and categorisations, toward the recognition of the openness, flexibility and insecurity of existence. At the same time, however, one cannot fail to recognise how the existentialist concerns about the nature of the self and human freedom run through Frisch's literary repertoire. The world reflected in Frisch's oeuvre is, albeit unconsciously, the world of existentialist philosophy – a world in which no set meaning is given and identities are unstable. Stiller/White's inauthentic living by way of his fixation with images, emblematic of the individual's entrapment in a defined social role, the physical and psychological *Selbstflucht* motif, as well as Stiller and Julika's experiencing ontological guilt, are clearly reminiscent of the themes of identity denial or non-compliance with one's 'true' identity which are located in the philosophical writings of Sartre. The dual existence of Stiller and

⁹² 'Noch einmal anfangen können: ein Gespräch mit Max Frisch,' ZEIT Interview with Dieter E. Zimmer, 22 December 1967, p. 13.

White similarly evokes the fugitive structure and the existence of the 'they-self', as discussed by Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit*. Finally, the notions of the attainment of freedom by way of 'choosing oneself', and the overcoming of existential angst by means of a 'leap of faith', as first deliberated by Kierkegaard, are explored by Frisch in considerable depth in the final sections of the novel, lending the work a 'sturdy missionary purpose',⁹³ according to Cunliffe. Ultimately, Stiller's failure or perhaps unwillingness to embrace the restorative powers of religious faith eventually serve to underscore the work's wider significance regarding the inherent contradiction involved in the idea of God, and similarly indicate how religious faith is incapable of 'saving' Stiller from his existentialist despair.

Within this cosmos Frisch finds individuals as much as societies in degeneration, succumbing to what he terms a 'Zeitalter der Reproduktion',⁹⁴ a predicament which the author of *Stiller* later highlights in the novel:

Wir leben in einem Zeitalter der Reproduktion. Das allermeiste in unserem persönlichen Weltbild haben wir nie mit eigenen Augen erfahren, genauer: wohl mit eigenen Augen, doch nicht an Ort und Stelle; wir sind Fernseher, Fernhörer, Fernwisser. Man braucht diese Städtchen nie verlassen zu haben, um die Hitlerstimme noch heute im Ohr zu haben, um den Schah von Persien aus drei Meter Entfernung zu kennen und zu wissen, wie der Monsun über den Himalaja heult oder wie es tausend Meter unter dem Meeresspiegel aussieht. [...] Was für ein Zeitalter! Es heißt überhaupt nichts mehr, Schwertfische gesehen zu haben, eine Mulattin geliebt zu haben, all dies kann auch in einer Kulturfilmmatinée geschehen sein, und Gedanken zu haben, ach Gott, es ist in diesem Zeitalter schon eine Rarität, einen Kopf zu treffen, der auf ein bestimmtes Plagiatprofil gebracht werden kann, es zeugt von Persönlichkeit, wenn einer die Welt etwa mit Heidegger sieht und nur mit Heidegger [sic], wir andern schwimmen in einem Cocktail, der ungefähr alles enthält, in nobelster Art von Eliot gemixt, und überall wissen wir ein

⁹³ Cunliffe, *Existentialist Elements*, p. 120.

⁹⁴ Cf. Hans Mayer, 'Anmerkungen zu Stiller', in *Materialien zu Max Frisch*, ed. Walter Schmitz (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1978), pp. 238-255, p. 243.

und wieder aus, und nicht einmal unsere Erzählungen von der sichtbaren Welt, wie gesagt, heißen etwas. (ST: 141)

Stiller (and possibly Frisch himself?) lament that human beings can no longer express their personal thoughts and feelings. The despairing protagonist bemoans that in the modern age an individual's ability to furnish an exact, true-to-life description of a distant location or event is no cogent proof of his firsthand knowledge thereof. Individuals create meaning and value, and the values implied by this view of the human condition, along with the obstacles to the realisation of those values, constitute the essential cornerstones in Frisch's writing. This also corresponds with his tendency to leave matters unresolved in his writing. As was mentioned, Frisch's literary works are rife with unanswered questions regarding these pressing problems surrounding modern existence. Frisch's works conform to no pre-defined philosophical or theoretical formula, which leaves his readers with the task of working through these problems for themselves. Meaning can *only* be generated by mankind, and it is essentially this hypothesis which constitutes on many levels the key thematic materials of Frisch's writing.

*‘Ich weiß nicht genau, ob es Gott gibt.
Aber es scheint mir ziemlich absurd
anzunehmen, es gäbe ihn nicht.’¹*

- Alfred Andersch, *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*

Within the field of German studies there remains little doubt about Alfred Andersch playing a ‘zentrale Rolle für die literarische Szene der ersten Nachkriegszeit’.¹ As an instrumental figure of the young generation movement of post-1945 German literature, it has long been supposed that Alfred Andersch’s literary works were primarily shaped by the experience of defeat in the Second World War and the condemnation of the values of National Socialism; this period of historical rupture triggered by widespread social and political turmoil in the 1940s has since been used to support the notion of a literary ‘zero hour’ or a ‘Stunde Null’, as evidence of a more or less complete break with a discredited national heritage.² Within the academic discipline Alfred Andersch is celebrated principally as a novelist and writer of short stories, although his career also includes his work as a prominent journalist and broadcaster as well as mediator and populariser of unknown foreign literature in the new Federal Republic, mainly from the English, Italian and French speaking world.³ The year 1948 saw the publication of his profoundly influential

¹ Irene Heidelberger-Leonhard, *Die ästhetische Position als politisches Gewissen: Zu den Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Kunst und Wirklichkeit in den Romanen* (Frankfurt/Berlin/New York: Lang, 1986), p. 15.

² Cf. Lothar Köhn, ‘Vom Nullpunkt zum Posthistoire: Zu Konstruktionselementen einer Geschichte der deutschen Literatur 1945-1900’, in *1945-1995: Fünfzig Jahre deutschsprachige Literatur in Aspekten*, ed. Gerhard P. Knapp & Gerd Labrousse (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), pp. 13-56.

³ Between 1948 and 1958 Andersch worked for radio stations in Frankfurt am Main, Hamburg and Stuttgart, where he largely worked on cultural ‘features’ and their attendant publications such as the ‘studio frankfurt’ series. Among his innovations was the ‘Abendstudio’ in Frankfurt, based on the model of the *BBC Third Programme*. His literary periodical *Texte und Zeichen* (1955-1957) was a major forum for the first German translations of modern European and American literature. Even after relocating to Switzerland in 1958 Andersch continued to contribute critical essays to the West German press.

essay ‘Deutsche Literatur in der Entscheidung: Ein Beitrag zur Analyse der literarischen Situation,’ which was followed in 1949 by a representative collection of essays by international authors entitled *Europäische Avantgarde*. Andersch founded the discussion-based ‘Evening Studio’ of Radio Frankfurt, and he edited the brochure series ‘studio frankfurt,’ that circulated radical new literature and sought to capture the vigour and dynamism of the young generation.⁴ From 1955 to 1957, Andersch was also editor of the literary journal *Texte und Zeichen* in which an eclectic variety of intellectuals, writers, and poets, for example, Theodor W. Adorno, Paul Celan, Günter Grass and Arno Schmidt were represented, as well as foreign writers such as Samuel Beckett, Roland Barthes, Ernest Hemingway and Albert Camus, all of whom came to shape Andersch’s own writing and thought. These achievements constitute the apex of Andersch’s influence on West German cultural development.

As the names Roland Barthes and Albert Camus here testify, as well as to some degree Beckett, it was French culture and literature in particular that played a crucial role in the reshaping of the postwar German culture sphere. In his reflections on the literary scene in postwar Germany, Walter Heist encapsulates the sense of collective German postwar admiration for France as a hothouse of new and exciting ideas; in 1948 he wrote: ‘Von der Außenwelt abgeschnitten, uns selbst überlassen, weggestoßen, gebrandmarkt und verzweifelt, wir waren allein. Wohin richteten wir in dieser Situation spontan unsere Blicke? Nach Frankreich’.⁵ It is among the aims of this chapter to consider the significance of French literary, philosophical and theological exports for Andersch’s artistic productions; a special role will, for reasons that will become obvious, fall to French existentialism. As early as 1946, Andersch refers to France as ‘das Land, in dem die Menschenrechte formuliert wurden’.⁶ According to Margaret Littler, Andersch recognised ‘a new strain of existentialist thought, an exciting new literature and the most genuine democratic aspirations in Europe’.⁷ In the plays of French dramatist Jean Anouilh (1910-1987),

⁴ Not all members of the ‘young generation’ were necessarily ‘young.’ Arno Schmidt, for instance, turned 31 in 1945.

⁵ Walter Heist, ‘Das war im Jahr 1931 oder 1932’, *Der Skorpion* 1, 1948, p. 6.

⁶ Alfred Andersch, ‘Jean Anouilh’s Antigone: Ein Drama der Jugend’, *Der Ruf* 2, 1 September 1946, p. 13.

⁷ Margaret Littler, *Alfred Andersch 1914-1980: And the Reception of French Thought in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1991), p. 83.

for instance, Andersch saw youth depicted as ‘unbedingtes Streben nach Wahrheit, Gerechtigkeit, Ehre’, victimised by the mistakes of former generations.⁸ In an unpublished appreciation of the French playwright, Andersch defends him against charges of neo-fascist tendencies, while supporting his main theme as ‘eine Predigt der Unbedingtheit, der Kompromisslosigkeit, der Verachtung aller Toleranz, der Absage an die Weisheit des Alters, des Appells an die Jugend, für die Reinheit ihres Wollens einzusetzen’ (sic).⁹ In his post-war journalism, similarly, Andersch presents all progressive and innovative forces in France as an achievement of the youth, and the particular appeal of French existentialism in this regard was the possibility of rehabilitating the integrity of a whole generation.

It was Andersch’s own lifelong conviction that one of his most formative cultural encounters was with Sartrean existentialism. Enthralled by modernism, Andersch embraced the innovative and experimental forms of the new existentialist literature. Indeed, the influence of Jean-Paul Sartre on Andersch has been the subject of great interest; Ingeborg Drewitz writes: ‘Die Hinneigung zum Existentialismus Sartre’scher Prägung war deutlich’;¹⁰ Wolfgang Rath positions Andersch’s autobiographical report ‘in der geistigen Nähe von Jean Paul Sartre’;¹¹ Rhys Williams asserts ‘Als Alfred Andersch “Die Kirschen der Freiheit” schrieb, hatte er sich Sartres existentialistische Theorie zu eigen gemacht [...]’,¹² and according to Livia Z. Wittmann, also writing about *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*; ‘Das beglückende Erlebnis der Freiheit am Ende des Buches kann nur als Zeichen des Sartreschen Existentialismus begriffen werden’.¹³ Studies by Anja Koberstein, Margaret Littler, Irène Heidelberger-Leonhard and Volker Wehdeking constitute particularly significant contributions to this area of research. The role of Sartrean existentialism is certainly not to be underestimated, for it heavily coloured Andersch’s views on

⁸ Andersch, ‘Anouilh’s Antigone’, *ibid.*

⁹ Alfred Andersch, ‘Die Lehren des Jean Anouilh’, *Nachlaß*, Marbach Literary Archive, accession no. 78.4805.

¹⁰ Ingeborg Drewitz, ‘Alfred Andersch oder Die Krise des Engagements: Der Erzähler’, *Merkur* June 20 1966, pp. 669-675, p. 670.

¹¹ Wolfgang Rath, ‘Alfred Andersch’, in *Literaturlexikon*, vol. 1, ed. Walther Killy (Munich: Bertelsmann Lexikon, 1988), p. 139.

¹² Rhys Williams, ‘Alfred Andersch’, in *Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*, vol. 1, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold (Munich: Edition Text und Kritik, 1978), pp. 3-12, p. 4.

¹³ Livia Z. Wittmann, *Alfred Andersch* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971), p. 7.

the ‘task’ of literature in the post-war years; the subversive nature of literature and its mission to keep society in a constant state of flux, the notion of ‘committed’ or ‘engaged’ literature (famously termed *littérature engagée* by Sartre), as well as the concepts of the flight into freedom, situational freedom in the form of ‘Augenblick,’ and bad faith form an important existential backdrop to Andersch’s literary oeuvre. Taking into consideration the abundance of scholarly interest in this topic, this chapter shall set itself the task of exploring Andersch’s existentialism within a wider framework, thus relativizing the importance of Sartrean existentialism. Whilst strands of Sartrean atheistic existentialism are certainly identifiable in Andersch’s works, one should not constrict oneself to a purely Sartrean interpretative approach when reading *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*, in which Andersch appears to rebuff certain aspects of the French philosopher’s doctrine, most notably in his treatment of the notion of predestination (*Schicksal*) in conjunction with individual freedom. This need for caution regarding an exclusively Sartrean reading of Andersch’s oeuvre is also expressed by Koberstein, whose study centres around the overarching premise: ‘Andersch hat zwar zentrale existentielle Begriffe produktiv rezipiert, diese jedoch so sehr an sein Weltbild angepasst, dass sich deren Inhalt kaum mehr mit Sartres Philosophie vereinbaren lässt’.¹⁴ Indeed, the very name of her study, *Gott oder das Nichts*, as quoted in *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*,¹⁵ denotes the fundamental difference between Sartre and Andersch’s philosophical positions, namely Andersch’s *Gottesverständnis* and Sartre’s atheism. Koberstein’s study essentially concludes that Andersch has ‘[Sartre’s] Philosophie an das Christentum angenähert’,¹⁶ a line of argumentation that will form my own methodological approach.

As part of this process of philosophical reassessment, and using Koberstein’s basic premise as an interpretative springboard, this study will examine Andersch’s awareness of and concern for theistic branches of the *arbre existentialiste*. With an innate conservatism, Andersch publically voiced an admiration for the representatives of the French *renouveau catholique*, as well as exponents of the

¹⁴ Anja Koberstein, *Gott oder das Nichts: Sartre-Rezeption im frühen Nachkriegswerk von Alfred Andersch im Kontext der zeitgenössischen Existentialismuskussion* (Frankfurt a/M: Lang, 1996), p. 221.

¹⁵ Alfred Andersch, *Die Kirschen der Freiheit: Ein Bericht* (Zürich: Diogenes, 1971), p. 113; subsequently abbreviated as KDF.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

English Catholic revival, most notably Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh. With regards to the former, Andersch observes: ‘Besonders Sartre und die jungen Kämpfer aus der “résistance” fordern diese Übereinstimmung von Tat und Gedanken, die bruchlose Existenz’.¹⁷ This reformist movement in the French Catholic church, of which the *junge Kämpfer* François Mauriac, Emmanuel Mounier, Jacques Maritain and Léon Bloy were notable advocates, welcomed a progressive outlook which anticipated new certainties to replace those abolished by the radical scepticism of early twentieth-century Europe, a philosophy which closely corresponded with Andersch’s own existentialist viewpoint in as much as it ‘das Aufsteigen einer großen Eingebung ankündigt und ihr nur den Weg bereitet’.¹⁸ In the same vein, Andersch in 1949 publically extolled Greene and Waugh in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* as exponents of a similar Catholic renewal movement in England.¹⁹ Andersch professes elsewhere: ‘Ich kann nur die Fakten geben, ich bin nicht imstande, zu erklären, warum unsere Kenntnis des englischen Romans mit Graham Greene und Evelyn Waugh aufhört’, adding: ‘Bei diesen beiden habe ich noch dazu den Eindruck, dass ihre Wirkung in hohem Maße ihrem Katholizismus zuzuschreiben ist’.²⁰ As will be explored in more detail later, Andersch’s public acclamation of these French and English Catholic writers is indicative of a more profound philosophical and religious engagement than perhaps initially expected. Revealing his personal deviation from Sartrean doctrine, what can be located in Andersch’s *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* is a programmatic exploration of such themes as fate and causality, themes which form the very crux of Mauriac’s, Mounier’s and Greene’s theistic writing.

Yet these philosophical figures were not the only source of inspiration for Andersch’s unique brand of existentialism. In addition to these Sartrean and English and French Catholic renewal influences, this chapter will also explore how Kierkegaard’s concept of angst as well as his notion of the aesthetic and the ethical stages of existence form an additional existentialist philosophical backdrop against

¹⁷ Cf. Alfred Andersch, ‘Das junge Europa formt sein Gesicht’, *Der Ruf* 1, 15 August 1946.

¹⁸ Alfred Andersch (ed.), *Europäische Avantgarde* (Frankfurt a/M: Frankfurter Hefte, 1949), p. 7.

¹⁹ Alfred Andersch, ‘Profaner Einwand’ (on Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited*), *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 5 February 1949.

²⁰ Alfred Andersch, ‘Auf der Suche nach dem englischen Roman’ in *Das Alfred Andersch Lesebuch*, ed. Gerd Haffmans (Zurich: Diogenes, 1979), pp. 168-74, pp.169-70.

which to read and interpret the characters populating Andersch's literary oeuvre. As Anne Raabe's extensive study of Kierkegaard on Andersch demonstrates, Kierkegaardian theistic philosophy, most notably his consideration for the distinctive existential stages of human life as explained, for example, in *Either/Or*, serves as an edifying model for various characters in Andersch's prose. With palpable echoes of Koberstein's underlying hypothesis, Raabe's study similarly centres on Andersch's uniting of aspects of existentialist thinking with fundamental theistic principles; Raabe observes;

Wer Anderschs Werke liest mit den Schriften Kierkegaards im Hintergrund, gewinnt den Eindruck, Andersch habe mit Kierkegaards Hilfe seinen Figuren philosophische Tiefe gegeben. Es ist wenig wunderlich, dass er gerade Kierkegaard so intensiv rezipiert hat. Denn zum einen fand er bei ihm die Verbindung von existenzialistischem Denken und der Hinwendung zum Christentum, die seinen eigenen Vorstellungen entsprach.²¹

Whilst it is not the intention of this chapter to overstate the overarching significance of Andersch's treatment of religious themes, as my upcoming discussion of Andersch's interest in the theistic philosophical positions of Kierkegaard, Greene, Mounier and Mauriac will reveal, it is crucial to reflect, as Koberstein and Raabe have done, on the inherently eclectic and individualist nature of Andersch's theoretical *Weltanschauung*. Siegfried Lenz's oxymoronic depiction of Andersch as 'ein religiöser Atheist' would appear to endorse precisely this hypothesis.²² Indeed Andersch's protagonist's spiritual musings - 'Ich weiß nicht genau, ob es Gott gibt. Aber es scheint mir ziemlich absurd anzunehmen, es gäbe ihn nicht' (KDF: 113) - reveal a complexity, yet also an apparent open-mindedness underlying Andersch's philosophical and theological stance, and - 'Die Freiheit ist das Alleinsein mit Gott oder dem Nichts' (KDF: 113) -, something which the following study of *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* will hope to illuminate.

²¹ Anne Raabe, *Das Wort stammt von Kierkegaard: Alfred Andersch und Sören Kierkegaard* (Frankfurt a/M: Lang, 1999), p. 12.

²² Siegfried Lenz, 'Freiheit, vom Kirschbaum gepflückt: Zu Alfred Anderschs autobiographischem Bericht über eine Fahnenflucht', in *Die Kirschen der Freiheit von Alfred Andersch: Materialien zu einem Buch und seiner Geschichte*, ed. Winfried Stephan (Zürich: Diogenes, 2002), pp. 45-49, pp. 47-48.

THE GRUPPE 47

In order to better contextualise the diverse existentialist influences that shaped Andersch's ideological and aesthetic thought, it is helpful to begin by placing his works in their cultural and literary context of production in post-war West Germany. This context is defined first and foremost by the *Gruppe 47*, of which Andersch and Hans Werner Richter were co-founders. Prior to this, Andersch and Richter, in conjunction with Walter Kolbenhoff, Wolfgang Weyrauch and Wolfdietrich Schnurre, had intended to set up another literary journal called *Der Skorpion*, yet this never got beyond the dummy issue stage on account of the American authorities withdrawing the necessary publishing license. Friedhelm Kröll notes that it was indeed the failure of *Der Skorpion* which provided the catalyst for the founding of the *Gruppe 47*.²³ The *Gruppe 47* was the primary postwar organisation of writers to assert its resistance to Germany's fascist past, and it was among the aims of the Group's founding fathers to establish the credibility of their generation and to pioneer German letters by founding a loose society of young, anti-fascist writers keen to use literature as a vehicle through which to reconstruct a social and democratic Germany. As Rhys Williams observes:

Both Alfred Andersch and Hans Werner Richter were to devote most of their own literary production to a reappraisal of their experiences in the Third Reich, playing out respectively a range of possible reactions to National Socialism, justifying and explaining their own failure to resist and presenting themselves as psychological victims of a totalitarian regime.²⁴

Richter and Andersch formed the group independent from political parties and the official cultural bodies financially subsidised by the Allies. Over the years, the

²³ Friedhelm Kröll, *Gruppe 47* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979), p.22.

²⁴ Cf. Rhys Williams, 'Inventing West German Literature: Alfred Andersch and the Gruppe 47', in *The Gruppe 47: Fifty Years on a Re-Appraisal of its Literary and Political Significance*, ed. Stuart Parkes & John J. White (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 69-88, p. 70.

group acquired an aura of resistance and non-conformism, an aura so formidable that fifty years later scholars found it necessary to reassess critically some of the Group's founding values.²⁵ The organisation's radical image was reinforced by the group's origins. The American authorities censored and then expelled Andersch and Richter from editing and writing for the German language cultural-political publication *Der Ruf*, first established in 1946, labelling them as nihilists for criticising U.S. re-education politics.²⁶ Andersch explained this point of cultural conflict in a 1979 interview: 'Eine Zeitschrift mit unserer Linie passte überhaupt nicht in das damalige publizistische US-Konzept, und aus diesem Grund wurde sie abgewürgt'.²⁷ Hans Werner Richter had initially marketed the journal as an alternative to the ideological positions of the United States and Russia, proposing instead a *via media* between capitalism and communism initiated by Germans shaped by the experience of war and fascism. Both Andersch and Richter sought to use literature as a means of political pedagogy. Mindful of the complicity of intellectuals in Nazi Germany the aims were as follows:

Sie wollten unter allen Umständen und für alle Zukunft eine Wiederholung dessen verhindern, was geschehen war, und sie wollten zur gleichen Zeit damit den Grundstein für ein neues demokratisches Deutschland, für eine bessere Zukunft und für eine neue Literatur legen, die sich ihrer Verantwortung gegenüber der politischen und gesamtgesellschaftlichen Entwicklung bewusst ist.²⁸

Given these aspirations to use literature as a public vehicle for political change, it is not surprising that literary ambition played out vividly in the meetings of the *Gruppe 47*. Reputations were made or broken at its summits, since a successful reading

²⁵ Cf. Stephan Braese, 'Vorwort', in *Bestandsaufnahme: Studien zur Gruppe 47*, ed. Stephan Braese (Berlin: Schmidt, 1999), pp. 7-10.

²⁶ Richter pointed out the hypocrisy of the American occupation authorities for restricting the liberties of Germans in the name of democratic re-education: 'Den Amerikanern ist die Tonlage des *Ruf* zu widerspenstig; man erwartet größere Demut [...] Wir sind nach Meinung der Amerikaner in der Kritik an der Besatzungsmacht zu weit gegangen und haben uns dabei den Beifall von der falschen Seite geholt', cf. SWF-Interview, 4 February 1979.

²⁷ Alfred Andersch, SWF-Interview, 4 February 1979.

²⁸ Hans Werner Richter, 'Fünfzehn Jahre', in *Almanach der Gruppe 47: 1947-1962*, ed. Hans Werner Richter (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1964), pp. 8-14, p. 8.

could result in prizes, publicity, and prestigious publishing contracts.²⁹ Soon after its founding the *Gruppe 47* included poets, playwrights, novelists, and critics who ran literary programmes at national radio stations and wrote popular criticism and reviews for major newspapers. Legitimizing and popularising the literature of its members through these forums, the group became one of the most influential literary organisations in German history and is credited with making at least two major contributions to German culture. First, it brought international fame to German letters by producing Nobel-Prize winning authors such as Heinrich Böll and Günter Grass, two early, contentious, and dedicated participants. Secondly, it contributed to the formation of a public intellectual culture in Germany, creating a powerful stage for the writer as a safeguard of the values of the social democratic republic. Hans Magnus Enzensberger has called the *Gruppe 47* ‘das Zentralcafé einer Literatur ohne Hauptstadt’ for its ability to gather together an eclectic group of young writers in a war-torn culture around the ideals of nonpartisan inquiry and rigorous literary critique.³⁰

POST-WAR EXISTENTIALISM: SARTRE AND THE EUROPEAN CATHOLIC RENEWAL

This development of a new intellectual culture in Germany is not without import for the influx of wider European literary and philosophical influences, most famously the post-1945 revival of existentialism in Paris. One of Andersch’s foremost encounters with Sartrean existentialism came about through Sartre’s 1943 play *Les Mouches*. In a brief introduction to the German edition of the dramatic work, Sartre indicates that he had originally written the play in response to the German invasion of France, after which ‘unsere Vergangenheit nicht mehr [existierte]’. Andersch

²⁹ Both Ingeborg Bachmann and Paul Celan received publishing contracts after the readings at the *Gruppe 47* meeting in 1952. The group was criticized as early as 1952 as a major engine of literary publicity. Friedrich Sieburg referred to Hans Werner Richter as ‘a manager of great political skill; his Group 47 awards literary prizes to one another, and within hearing range of his megaphone every legendary beginning is transformed into a life work that fills the radio programs and columns of cultural presses.’ The literary critics and publicists who attended the meetings, including the founding fathers (Hans Werner Richter and Alfred Andersch), and Hans Mayer and Marcel Reich-Ranicki, were essential in consolidating the fame of the group and its members. Cf. Heinrich Vormweg, ‘Die Kritiker der Gruppe 47: Innen und Aussen’, in *Die Gruppe 47 in der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik*, ed. Justus Fetscher, Eberhard Lämmert, Jürgen Schütte (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1991), pp. 239-50, p. 246.

³⁰ Hans Magnus Enzensberger, ‘Die Clique’, in *Almanach der Gruppe 47, 1947-1962*, ed. Hans Werner Richter (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1962), pp. 22-27, p. 27.

quotes from the same introduction in his 'Deutsche Literatur in der Entscheidung', attesting to his knowledge of the Frenchman's dramatic work; he writes:

Und er fährt fort, und wendet sich an die Deutschen (denn wir befinden uns in der Vorrede Jean-Paul Sartres zur deutschen Ausgabe seines Dramas 'Die Fliegen'): 'Heute haben die Deutschen das gleiche Problem vor sich. Auch für die Deutschen, glaube ich, ist Selbstverleugnung unfruchtbar. [...] Dazu verhelfen ihnen nur: eine totale und aufrichtige Verpflichtung auf eine Zukunft in Freiheit und Arbeit, ein fester Wille, diese Zukunft aufzubauen, und das Vorhandensein der größtmöglichen Zahl von Menschen guten Willens'.³¹

Les Mouches is essentially an existentialist retelling of Aeschylus's *The Liberation Bearers*. In killing his mother Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus in revenge for their previous murder of his father Agamemnon, Orestes is also killing off the gods to whom he had previously sworn fealty. As Jupiter, the king of the gods, confesses to Aegisthus: 'Once freedom lights its beacon in a man's heart, the gods are powerless against him'.³² In realisation of his absolute freedom, Orestes feels the cold night of an 'endless emptiness, as far as the eye can reach'.³³ By relinquishing his belief in the gods, the warmth and comfort of the value systems set up around him are gone; he now lives alone and for himself. 'I am free, Electra. Freedom has crashed down on me like a thunderbolt', he declares.³⁴ To regret the crime he has committed would be a denial of himself and thus of his own freedom; Orestes therefore refuses repentance, declaring allegiance to his crime as his only real possession. 'I have done *my* deed, Electra, and that deed was good', he contends. 'I shall bear it on my shoulders as a carrier at a ferry carries the traveller to the farther bank. [...] The heavier it is to carry, the better pleased I shall be; for that burden is my freedom'.³⁵ The goddesses of vengeance have no power, he tells his sister, unless human beings choose to listen to them. In the play's final act Jupiter, who had

³¹ Alfred Andersch, 'Deutsche Literatur in der Entscheidung', p. 134.

³² Jean-Paul Sartre, 'The Flies', in *No Exit and Three Other Plays* (New York: Vintage, 1955), pp. 49-127, p. 104.

³³ Ibid., p. 92.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 108.

³⁵ Ibid.

previously sought to convince Orestes of his godlike omnipotence, appears ‘tired and dejected’.³⁶ Orestes explains to Jupiter:

Suddenly, out of the blue, freedom crashed down on me and swept me off my feet. Nature sprang back, my youth went with the wind, and I knew myself alone, utterly alone in the midst of this well-meaning little universe of yours. I was like a man who’s lost his shadow. And there was nothing left in heaven, no right or wrong, nor anyone to give me orders.³⁷

In light of his new freedom, Orestes understands that he is ‘outside nature, against nature,’ and ‘doomed to have no other law but’ his own.³⁸ Both Electra and the citizens of Argos whom Orestes has freed from the yoke of tyranny resent and fear him. They do not want the new and terrifying freedom that Orestes has claimed. Electra regrets her crimes and does penance at the feet of Jupiter, thus saving herself from the vengeful Furies, who are symbolised by the diabolical flies of the play’s title. Henceforth Electra will dedicate herself to the received order of earth and heaven. But Orestes becomes a ‘king without a kingdom’ and understands that ‘all here is new, all must begin anew’.³⁹ A naturalised German hero of the ‘Stunde Null,’ Orestes leaves Argos pursued by the spirits of the old order that he has destroyed.

In Sartre’s depiction, the citizens of German-occupied France were faced with a clear choice; they could succumb to unproductive regret and self-hatred, or they could choose a new life of freedom. It is this freedom from the past and from self-loathing that Sartre’s protagonist Orestes represents. Germans at the end of the Second World War, Sartre believes, are faced with a similar situation:

Neu aber war – auch wenn ein feindliches Heer Frankreich besetzt hatte – die Zukunft! [...] Heute haben die Deutschen das gleiche Problem vor sich. [...] Ich will damit nicht sagen, dass die Erinnerung an die Fehler der Vergangenheit aus ihrem Gedächtnis verschwinden soll. Nein. Aber ich bin

³⁶ Ibid., p. 120.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 121-122.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 122.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 127.

überzeugt, dass nicht eine willfährige Selbstverleugnung ihnen jenen Pardon verschafft, den die Welt ihnen gewähren kann. Dazu verhelfen ihnen nur: eine totale und aufrichtige Verpflichtung auf eine Zukunft in Freiheit und Arbeit.⁴⁰

For Andersch, Sartre's philosophy embodied the new freedom of both Germany and German literature, severed from ties to the past and facing a self-created future. In Andersch's view Germans must, like Orestes, disunite themselves from all ties to harmful literary and cultural traditions, and they must do so without self-hatred and false repentance. The catastrophe of Nazism demonstrated the complete bankruptcy of German morality, Andersch argued: 'Wie gut wäre es gewesen, wenn die Deutschen in den letzten zwölf Jahren der Suggestion einer Philosophie entronnen wären, die gerade in ihrer Entartung ihr Wesen enthüllte'.⁴¹ American occupation authorities were hostile to the philosophy of existentialism because, as Stephen Brockmann puts it, it 'did not fit their neat, optimistic plans for re-educating the German people. But a return to previous moralistic naiveté would be,' as Brockmann continues, 'detrimental if not point-blank impossible'.⁴² Andersch goes on: 'Die Philosophie des Idealismus, welche die Freiheit als Bindung an die Verantwortung begreifen wollte, trug sich mit ihrer Perversion selbst zu Grabe'. In contrast to an idealistic philosophy which sought to bind human beings to objective values, existentialism offered 'Freiheit an und für sich,' unfettered freedom. 'Begreifen wir nicht die göttliche Heiterkeit, die uns diese Freiheit gibt?' Andersch asks. He continues:

Ergreifen wir sie nicht endlich, endlich, nachdem *uns* die Bindung der *Freiheit* an die 'objektiven Werte' überall nur zu Sklaverei geführt hat? Oder wollen wir morgen wieder Menschen töten, weil wir angeblich im Besitz der hohen Werte und ethischen Ziele sind, welche die nicht haben, die wir töten?

⁴⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Die Fliegen', in *Gesammelte Dramen* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1984), pp. 7-65, p. 9.

⁴¹ Alfred Andersch, 'Die Existenz und die objektiven Werte: Eine Entgegnung', *Die Neue Zeitung*, 15 August 1947, p. 3.

⁴² Stephen Brockmann, 'Heroes of Zero Hour', in *Heroes and Heroism in German Culture: Essays in Honor of Jost Hermand*, ed. Stephen Brockmann & James D. Steakley (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), pp. 103-122, p. 109.

Statt dass wir zurückkehren zur menschlichen Existenz und von ihr aus, vom Grund unseres menschlichen Seins aus uns entscheiden: nicht zu töten?⁴³

If Germans were not to accept this freedom, then they would probably soon find themselves once again waging war and killing other people who did not share their supposedly higher ideals.

As a sort of acknowledgement for Sartre's direct appeal to his German readership in the German edition of *Les Mouches*, Andersch's poem 'andererseits' can be viewed both as a retort and homage to the French philosopher's influence on him, as well as post-war Germany at large; it reads: 'die anderen // seien die hölle // hat sartre gemeint // vor allen schriftstellern / meiner zeit / derjenige der mich / am stärksten bewegt hat // ich liebe sartre [sic]'.⁴⁴ In the poem he dissociates himself from the French philosopher, however, by also proclaiming: 'ich glaube nicht mehr daran / das wir uns / von hölle / zu hölle / grüssen // die anderen / sind nicht // die hölle sondern / höchstens / die einsamkeit'. In the same year Andersch writes: 'Meine eigene Biographie ist ohne Sartre und Beckett nicht denkbar. Ich relativiere diese Erlebnisse nicht; Sartres *Ekel* und Becketts *Warten auf Godot* betrachte ich noch heute als einzigartige Abenteuer des Geistes'.⁴⁵ Andersch's interest in and knowledge of French intellectual movements is already evident in his journalistic contributions to 'Der Ruf. Unabhängige Blätter der Jungen Generation', which he co-edited with Hans Werner Richter from 15 August 1946 until 15 April 1947.⁴⁶ 'Schon 1946 hatte er [Andersch] mit intensiver Beschäftigung des französischen Existentialismus begonnen,' explains Georg Böhringer, 'der nicht nur auf Andersch, sondern auch auf den *Ruf* großen Einfluss ausübte'.⁴⁷ As Margaret Littler observes:

⁴³ Andersch, 'Existenz und die objektiven Werte', *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Alfred Andersch, 'andererseits', in *empört euch der himmel ist blau: Gedichte und Nachdichtungen 1946-1977* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1977), p. 103.

⁴⁵ Alfred Andersch, 'Öffentlicher Brief an einen sowjetischen Schriftsteller, das Überholte betreffend', in *Öffentlicher Brief an einen sowjetischen Schriftsteller* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1977), pp. 195-213, p. 200.

⁴⁶ A discussion of Sartrean existentialism can be located in Andersch's 'Das junge Europa formt sein Gesicht', *Der Ruf* 1, 15 Aug 1946; Andersch, 'Eine Konferenz des jungen Europa' [article on European writers and artists], *Der Ruf* 1 Nov 1946; other articles include Walter Mannzen, 'Die Selbstentfremdung des Menschen', *Der Ruf* 2 (1946); Mannzen, 'Albert Camus und das Absurde', *Der Ruf* 8 (1946); Carl August Weber, 'Die literarischen Strömungen in Frankreich und die junge Generation', *Der Ruf* 5, 15 October 1946.

⁴⁷ Georg Böhringer, 'Zeitschriften der jungen Generation', in *Zur literarischen Situation*, ed. Gerhard Hay (Kronberg: Athenäum, 1977), pp. 86-117, p. 105.

‘[t]he united left-wing politics of post-Résistance France, combined with the new form of Existentialism developing in the group around Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Camus, made France appear a source of genuinely new and constructive ideas for the future of Europe’.⁴⁸

There are nevertheless also some indications even at this time that Andersch regarded Sartrean existentialism as little more than a philosophical ‘fad’ and that his opinions were based on slight knowledge of the Frenchman’s work. In ‘Die Existenz und die objektiven Werte’, Andersch’s fervent defence of existentialism against the denunciation of Marburg Professor Julius Ebbinghaus, he portrays it as the antithesis of National Socialism, which constituted a distortion of the objective values of German Idealism. Yet even in this 1947 article, Andersch accepts: ‘Sie [die Existenzphilosophie] ist insofern eine Modephilosophie, als sie allerdings ihre erregende Aktualität aus dem apokalyptischen Zustand dieser Zeit bezieht’.⁴⁹ In hindsight thirty years later Andersch concedes that it was erroneous to conduct such an argument with a professor of philosophy:

Ich fürchte, ich habe mich mit einer Erwiderung gründlich blamiert [...] Es war ja auch Hochstapelei gewesen, über Sartre zu schreiben, obwohl ich damals von ihm nichts gelesen hatte als *Die Fliegen*, *Die Mauer* und *Ist der Existentialismus ein Humanismus?* Aber ich hatte den Eindruck, mit ihm käme etwas Neues.⁵⁰

And yet, Andersch does make the most of his sparse familiarity with French existentialism; for instance the 1948 essay ‘Deutsche Literatur in der Entscheidung’, which Andersch read at the second meeting of the *Gruppe 47*, conspicuously concludes with a quotation from Sartre’s foreword to the German edition of *Les Mouches*. Elsewhere though, as in his 1948 article ‘Nihilismus oder Moralität’, Andersch deemed it necessary to defend and qualify his response to Sartre’s words, highlighting the limited availability of German translations of the philosopher’s

⁴⁸ Littler, *Andersch*, p. 13.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Alfred Andersch, ‘Der Seesack/Aus einer Autobiographie’, in *Literaturmagazin* 7, ed. Nicolas Born and Jürgen Manthey (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1977), pp. 116-133, p. 129.

writing: 'Über Sartre können wir ja alle nicht reden, denn wir kennen sein Werk nur in Fragmenten. Es bedeutet jedenfalls keine Annahme der Sartreschen Philosophie, wenn ich das Vorwort zu den *Fliegen* zitiere'.⁵¹ Later in this article he refers to Sartre's ideas 'nur als Hilfsmittel' in the regeneration of German literature and 'die notwendige Korrektur' for a misguided Naturalism. Nevertheless, 'Deutsche Literatur in der Entscheidung' was an important theoretical statement both for Andersch and the *Gruppe 47*. Although written at almost the same time as Sartre's 'Qu'est ce que la littérature?'⁵² and thus uninfluenced by it, Andersch's argument is based on the existentialist premise of 'die tiefe Verwandlungsfähigkeit des Menschen im Allgemeinen, des künstlerischen Menschen im Besonderen'.⁵³ Commenting on these two literary-philosophical works and their societal function, Anja Koberstein observes:

Sowohl Sartre als auch Andersch geht es um die Frage nach dem 'gesellschaftlichen Standort des Kunstwerks wie des Schriftstellers'. Beide gehen von einer Wechselwirkung von Literatur und Politik aus, wobei Freiheit die Voraussetzung und das Ziel der Literatur sei und diese durch ein sekundäres Handeln durch Enthüllen der Realität eine zukunftsweisende, gesellschaftsverändernde Wirkung habe.⁵⁴

Andersch nevertheless concludes that existentialism can be seen as a provisional stage on the way towards a new anthropology; he writes in 'Deutsche Literatur in der Entscheidung':

Hier soll nicht der Versuch gemacht werden, den Zusammenbruch aller Werte mit einem neuen Rezept zu beantworten, dem des Existentialismus. Wahrscheinlich ist der Existentialismus in seiner gegenwärtigen Form nicht mehr als die Vorstufe einer neuen und umfassenden Anthropologie, auf die wir warten.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Alfred Andersch, 'Nihilismus oder Moralität', in *Horizont* 13, 7 July 1948.

⁵² Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (Paris 1948), *What Is Literature?*, trans. Bernard Frechtmann (London: Methuen, 1950).

⁵³ Alfred Andersch, 'Deutsche Literatur', p. 111.

⁵⁴ Koberstein, *Gott oder das Nichts*, p. 157ff.

⁵⁵ Andersch, 'Deutsche Literatur', p. 133.

A brief comparison of the programme developed by Andersch in 'Deutsche Literatur in der Entscheidung' with Sartre's 'Qu'est-ce que la littérature?', in which the French existentialist famously coins the notion of *littérature engagée*, serves to reveal both similarities and significant differences between their aesthetic positions. For Sartre, Littler writes, 'all prose writing is a social act, and creative freedom inseparable from social responsibility'.⁵⁶ We understand this notion of responsibility, distinct from responsibility as liability, as an obligation or duty that attaches to an agent via his or her occupancy of a particular social role. A teacher's responsibilities might include lecturing and nurturing; a police officer is responsible for safeguarding the law; a doctor is responsible for taking adequate care of his or her patients. Sartre claims that writers have a responsibility to combat oppression. Language reveals itself as an extension of the revealing power of consciousness and, for Sartre, the 'committed' or 'engaged' writer invites the reader to reflect critically upon the situation and to realise freely his or her responsibility for bringing about change. As he explains in 'Qu'est-ce que la littérature?':

The prose-writer is a man who has chosen a certain method of secondary action which we may call action by disclosure. [...] The 'engaged' writer knows that words are actions. He knows that to reveal is to change and that one can reveal only by planning to change. He has given up the impossible dream of presenting an impartial picture of society and the human condition.⁵⁷

'The function of the writer,' Sartre goes on, 'is to act in such a way that nobody can be ignorant of the world and that nobody may say that he is innocent of what it's all about'.⁵⁸ The reader who is confronted with the real world in his readings cannot pretend to be unaware of the problems contained within it. With this awareness, the reader too must act to change the world, a belief which readily harks back to the Sartrean notion of willing the 'other' as free so that I may be free. The reader may be confronted with the fact that individual freedoms are impinged upon. Because

⁵⁶ Littler, *Andersch*, p. 14.

⁵⁷ Sartre, 'What is Literature?', p. 14.

⁵⁸ Sartre, *ibid.*

human beings long to be free, they need the greatest number of people to be free. It becomes the individual's duty to act in such a way that ensures the freedom of others. Man's own desire for freedom entails that he or she takes concrete measures to make the world one in which all human beings can experience freedom. The writer and reader thus come to recognise each other by mutually appealing to the freedom of the other. The reader/writer relationship is reciprocal in the sense that each party accepts his or her need for the other. Sartre summarises this dynamic as follows:

Thus, the author writes in order to address himself to the freedom of readers, and he requires it in order to make his work exist. But he does not stop there; he also requires that they return this confidence which he has given them, that they recognise his creative freedom, and that they in turn solicit it by a symmetrical and inverse appeal. Here there appears the other dialectical paradox of reading; the more we experience our freedom, the more we recognise that of the other; the more he demands of us, the more we demand of him.⁵⁹

Just as Sartre believed it to be the task of literature to keep society 'open', in a state of permanent revolution and flux, Andersch too shared the notion of the inherently subversive nature of literature. For Andersch, literature became the place of dwelling for possibility, experimentality and uncertainty. As an existentialist form of self-encounter and self-liberation, literature and art carry within themselves the possibility of breaking away from the political and private situations that are difficult to bear. Literature was, for Andersch, a vehicle through which individuals could disentangle themselves from falsity and repression and strive towards change.

Andersch's fundamental premise is that art embodies freedom and stands in opposition to power. Any form of artistic expression which does not oppose power is thus not true art, and art which limits its freedom by adopting a cause does so to the detriment of its aesthetic value. Hence in a repressive regime all art which supports the regime is unworthy of the name. This can be used in defence of the

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 45.

literature of *Innere Emigration*, as any literature that Andersch's perceived of having 'aesthetic value' written under National Socialism must have been oppositional by nature. As he explains in 'Deutsche Literatur in der Entscheidung':

Von ihr [der Literatur der inneren Emigration] zu behaupten, sie habe durch ihr reines Verbleiben schon das System gestützt, ist absurd; sie hat vielmehr in einem jahrelangen aufreibenden Kleinkrieg mit der offiziellen Propaganda zur inneren Aushöhlung des Systems beigetragen.⁶⁰

Ernst Jünger is offered as the perfect example to support this hypothesis, as Andersch detects a qualitative change in his prose coinciding with the rejection of National Socialism: 'Die Konversion Ernst Jüngers ist das letzte Schlußstück in den Beweisen für unsere These, daß echte Künstlerschaft identisch war mit Gegnerschaft zum Nationalsozialismus'.⁶¹

Andersch's intellectual curiosities are nevertheless manifold and embrace other strands of existentialist philosophy that extend beyond Sartrean doctrine. An additional influence here was, as I mentioned at the outset, the *renouveau catholique* which took root in France at the beginning of the twentieth century. In a radio feature on Jacques Maritain it becomes clear that Andersch's interest in the French Catholic revival was linked to perceptual and philosophical issues, as well as to what he saw as its progressive and constructive nature. Taking as its focal point 'die revolutionäre Wiederentdeckung der thomistischen Philosophie und die Entstehung eines neuen geistigen Kraftzentrums in Frankreich', Andersch provided a historical-philosophical excursus from the perspective of a 'Nicht-Philosophen, der die Leistung der Maritains [both Jacques Maritain and his wife Raïssa] innerhalb dieser katholischen Reformbewegung herausarbeitet'.⁶²

During this period Catholicism in France was suffering from the anti-Catholic and anti-clerical policies of the Third Republic. Education had undergone a process of secularisation and the Jesuits and most other teaching orders had been expelled in

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 15.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 13.

⁶² Alfred Andersch, 'Aufbruch zum Absoluten', *Süddeutscher Rundfunk*, 23 December 1955.

the late nineteenth century. Religion was banished from the public sphere as religious symbols were removed from courtrooms, public acts of devotion prohibited, and diplomatic relations with Rome terminated. Divorce was introduced and Sunday work permitted. Separation of church and state became the law of the land. Catholicism was tolerated but not supported. On the contrary, it was seen by significant segments of the population as inimical to people's well being. Those who retained ties with Catholicism were mostly from society's upper echelons who had maintained an emotional attachment to the Church, which they associated with monarchical grandeur. The peasantry, who had been largely de-Christianised and given only rudimentary and insufficient religious instruction, relied on the Church primarily for baptisms, marriages or funerals. Even for those who regularly practised their religion, nineteenth-century Catholicism seemed fundamentally lethargic and inert.⁶³

In this dire situation there were serious and sensitive Catholics whose fervour was increased by their sense of being a community under siege. These individuals had often abandoned their childhood faith and become atheists in their youth, but had reconverted to Catholicism in adulthood. One of them was the poet, dramatist and diplomat Paul Claudel (1868-1955), whose works, among them *Partage de midi* (1906), *L'Otage* (1911), and *Le Soulier de satin* (1929), featured the recurring themes of human and divine love and the search for salvation. Poet and essayist Charles Péguy (1873-1914) explored in his essays, most notably 'Un Nouveau Théologien' (1913) and 'L'Argent' (1913), the importance and even holiness of poverty, the shallowness of the Church's believers, and the sanctity of tradition. The novelist, essayist, pamphleteer and poet Léon Bloy (1846-1917) similarly discussed in his work the doctrine of the communion of saints and called attention to the poor as an integral part of that communion, thus depicting poverty as both a social evil and source of sanctification. A selection of Bloy's prophetic tomes on reparatory suffering and the imminent advent of the Holy Spirit includes *Le Désespéré* (1886), *La Femme pauvre* (1897), *Le Salut par les Juifs* (1892), and *Celle qui pleure* (1908), works which constitute a strong critique of the hypocrisy and materialism of many

⁶³ Cf. Marian E. Crowe, *Aiming at Heaven, Getting the Earth: The English Catholic Novel Today* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2007).

merely nominal Catholics. The philosopher and political thinker Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) converted to Catholicism under the influence of Bloy and dedicated himself to the challenge of giving Catholicism a new voice. In particular, Maritain stressed the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas and the philosophy of Aristotle, both of whose insistence on approaching the sensible world within a framework of rational thought struck Maritain, as outlined in his *Introduction générale à la philosophie* of 1937, as the perfect means of combatting what he perceived as the materialist and irrationalist worldview as denounced by Pope Leo XIII in his *Rerum Novarum* of 1891. The philosopher Emmanuel Mounier (1905-50) was likewise captivated by the Christian mysticism of Bloy and Péguy and, later, the neo-Thomist existentialism of Maritain. As a guiding spirit in the French movement of personalism, Mounier saw human beings as wholly responsible for taking an active role in history, even if the ultimate goal lies beyond temporal existence. As he articulated in his philosophical tome *Qu'est-ce-que le personnalisme?* (*Be Not Afraid*): 'a philosophy of engagement [...] is inseparable from a philosophy of the absolute or of the transcendence of the human model'.⁶⁴ As a prominent figure in what Felix Ó Murchadha defines as the 'revitalization of the intellectual tradition of Roman Catholicism',⁶⁵ Mounier offered a personalist doctrine which endeavoured to bridge the gulf between the individualist existentialism of philosophers such as Kierkegaard, and the emphasis on social and political revolution within the Marxist tradition. Also in his 1946 article on existentialism, published in the literary journal *Esprit*, Mounier depicts a figurative genealogical 'arbre existentialiste' which is shown with predominantly Christian roots and thick boughs of modern religious movements.⁶⁶ Although Mounier identifies his personalism as a branch of the existentialist tree, he outwardly rejects what he perceived as the inherently nihilistic facets of the existentialist thinking of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger. In arguing that personal and political regeneration remained an honest possibility, he instead adopts a more utopian position regarding the possibilities of human emancipation more attuned to Marxism.

⁶⁴ Emmanuel Mounier, *Be Not Afraid: Studies in Personalist Sociology*, trans. by Cynthia Rowland (New York: Harper, 1951), p. 135.

⁶⁵ Felix Ó Murchadha, 'Religion and Ethics', in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Phenomenology: Responses and Developments*, ed. Alan D. Schrift & Leonard Lawlor (Durham: Acumen, 2010), pp. 195-216, p. 195.

⁶⁶ Cf. Emmanuel Mounier, 'Introduction aux existentialismes', *Esprit*, no. 4 (April 1946).

In keeping with the papal encyclical of Leo XIII, all of the above believed themselves called upon to mount an offensive against the forces of scientism and positivism. They sought to make use of their considerable intellectual gifts and their ability to structure their ideas in the form of the written word. Thus, the *renouveau catholique* in France always had about it the quality of a pro-active force, a dynamic counter-thrust to joust with the spiritually dead conceits of the modern world.

The writings of Emmanuel Mounier, François Mauriac and Jacques Maritain in particular are indicative of this spirit of intellectual activism, and it is here that clear parallels with Andersch's *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* are discernible. These men sought to bring a vigorous exposition of the Catholic alternative to the widespread despair and suffering of twentieth-century European life. Generally characterised as an aggressive explication of Thomistic philosophy, Maritain's essay 'Court Traité de l'Existence et de l'Existant' of 1947 shows the philosophy of St. Thomas as one which has immediate applications to human life in the age of science. Written at the height of the post-war Sartrean revolution, when Sartre, de Beauvoir and Camus brought the grimness of war-torn Europe into the realm of philosophy with their existentialist approach towards humanity, Maritain's 'Court Traité' offered a salutary alternative. Maritain was not content simply to rail at the twentieth-century existentialists as godless nay-sayers. Rather, he offered his own Christian version of existentialist philosophy that was founded on a Thomistic understanding of the human condition. Though sympathetic with what we might call *popular* existentialism's claims about the centrality of existence, Maritain criticised its Cartesian disregard for essence. Particularly in the Sartrean version, existentialism is bereft of any determinate understanding of reality or of action. Maritain explains how Thomism forms the basis for his consideration of existentialist thought and regards St. Thomas as the only true exponent of existentialism. Describing this thought as 'the only authentic existentialism',⁶⁷ Maritain seeks to demonstrate that far from being a distant part of history, the thirteenth-century Dominican friar speaks to the twentieth century as forcefully as ever. Alluding to Sartrean

⁶⁷ Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, trans. Lewis Galantiere & Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Pantheon, 1949), p. 1.

existentialism as something of a post-war philosophical fad, Maritain also insists that he was not ‘attempting to trick out Thomas Aquinas in a costume fashionable to our day’; he was instead ‘asserting a prior right’ to the tag word of the moment.

The first point to note in relation to Alfred Andersch is that Maritain’s neo-Thomist existentialism starts by linking human and divine freedom, and by citing St. Thomas in connection with his doctrine of freedom: man’s freedom is grounded in our reason, it is inescapably our nature,⁶⁸ a notion which is reiterated in Andersch’s explorations of the themes of fate and predestination. Maritain sharply distinguishes the Kantian doctrine of freedom, which he characterises as ‘opposing the order of freedom to the order of nature or being,’ from Thomism which ‘unites without confusing them, and grounds the former in the latter’.⁶⁹ For all his references to our nature and even to nature in general, Maritain sees as a ‘most awesome mystery’ ‘the problem of the relation between the liberty of the created existent and the eternal purposes of uncreated liberty’.⁷⁰ As Laura Westra affirms, ‘this should not be surprising in a thinker who states categorically that metaphysics precedes essence, and who discusses the question of freedom against the backdrop of good and evil and the moral life’.⁷¹

Maritain’s treatise sets itself the task of answering the following question: ‘What is the situation of man and of his fallible liberty in the face of the absolutely free and absolutely immutable eternal plan established by the Uncreated in respect of the Created?’⁷² In order to answer this question, he begins by affirming the absolute immutability of the divine nature, the perfect comprehension by the divine *scientia* of all possible and actual creatures and created states of affairs (past, present and future, from the point of view of time), and the sovereign causality of God as the immutable One who sovereignly moves all created agents and their powers to act,

⁶⁸ Thomas Aquinas, ‘Questiones Disputatae de Veritate’, q. 24, art. 2, in *Truth*, trans. Robert W. Mulligan, James V. McGlynn & Robert W. Schmidt (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954)

⁶⁹ Jacques Maritain, ‘A Philosophy of Freedom’, in *Freedom in the Modern World*, trans. Richard O’Sullivan (New York: Gordian, 1971 [1936]), pp. 4-41, p. 4.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, *Existence*, p. 85.

⁷¹ Laura Westra, ‘Freedom, Existence and Existentialism’, in *Jacques Maritain: The Man and his Metaphysics*, ed. John F. X. Knasas (Notre Dame, IN.: American Maritain Association, 1988), pp. 243-53, p. 243.

⁷² *Ibid.*, *Existence*, p. 85.

including the human will.⁷³ In a word, Maritain holds that God, as *Ipsum esse per se subsistens*, is the first exemplary, efficient, and final Cause of every iota of being and actuality in the created order. But if *Ipsum esse* is the first efficient Cause of every iota of being and act in the created order, then it follows that He is the first Cause of every human act insofar as it has any ontological status whatsoever. Andersch's explorations of causality in his 1952 novel again seem to echo this theistic position. Thus Maritain says that in every morally good human act the given act proceeds wholly and entirely from God, as from the first efficient cause, and wholly and entirely from the created agent, as from the secondary efficient cause, the latter being completely dependent upon and subordinated to the causal influx of the former.⁷⁴ As Maritain explains:

Let it be said right off that there are two fundamentally different ways of interpreting the word existentialism. One way is to affirm the primacy of existence, but as implying and preserving essences or natures as manifesting the supreme victory of the intellect and of intelligibility. This is what I consider to be authentic existentialism. The other way is to affirm the primacy of existence, but as destroying or abolishing essences or natures and as manifesting the supreme defeat of the intellect and intelligibility.⁷⁵

In making his reliance on reason known, Maritain comes as close to existentialism as he will permit himself to come. Maritain distinguishes between man as individuality and personality. Man is both an individual and a person. As an individual he or she is related to a community of other individuals as the part is to the whole. Because man is also a person, he or she is more than a social and political entity. Mankind possesses natural rights, and thus belongs to a society as an individual and has higher rights than society as a person. These higher rights involve the individual's relationship with God.⁷⁶

⁷³ Thomas Aquinas, 'Summa Theologiae I, qu. 105, art. 4', in *Aquinas: Selected Political Writings*, ed. A. Passerin d'Entreves (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959), pp. 149-51

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, *Existence*, p. 88.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷⁶ These Maritain notions can also be traced in Henry Morton Robinson's *The Great Snow* (1947), *The Cardinal* (1950) and *The Water of Life* (1960), as well as Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* (1940) and *The Heart of the Matter* (1948).

Mounier was also part of the French Catholic intelligentsia which took inspiration from the theological climate of the early twentieth century. Mounier, like his philosophical confreres, believed that the Catholic faith, albeit reinvigorated, offered a saving alternative to the age of materialism. In his eyes, the age of materialism was a many-headed hydra; as Seth Armus explains, it was made up of a number of components, all of which he saw as threats to the human spirit. Armus observes how Mounier was mistrustful of products of the modern era which he referred to as 'liberalism' and 'individualism'.⁷⁷ Mounier proceeded to organise a counter-movement through which he could arouse the faithful to the perils of liberal democracy. In 1932 he established the literary journal *Esprit*, which would serve as a forum for the dissemination of his ideas. As editor, Mounier encouraged Catholic writers to contribute articles not only supportive of the faith, but which were also critical of the whole range of evils that had arisen from the age of materialism. At the heart of Mounier's revolutionary movement was the philosophy of personalism, whereby the individual maintains his or her individuality, but at the same time remains part of the body of Christ in the Catholic community. Such individuality was certainly not to be confused with that wilfulness of the individual that Mounier identified as a legacy of the popular democratic movement. On the contrary, he saw what passed for the emphasis on the individual or the 'person' in twentieth-century society as 'a variety and a vagueness which risk bringing to the metaphysics of the individual rather peculiar obligations. In fact, every day an unrepentant individualism renews itself in forms of a "personalism" which is an easy consciousness of the self. We are thus able to see this inexhaustible "person" stand out as a complaisant devil'.⁷⁸ In this sense, the title 'personalism' can legitimately be applied to any school of thought that focuses on the reality of persons and their unique existential status among beings in general. Mounier believes that the human person should be the ontological and epistemological starting point of philosophical reflection and seeks to investigate the experience, the status, and the dignity of the human being as person, regarding this as the starting-point for all subsequent philosophical analysis.

⁷⁷ Cf. Armus D. Seth, 'The Eternal Enemy: Emmanuel Mounier's *Esprit* and French Anti-Americanism', in *French Historical Studies* 24, no. 2 (Spring 2001), pp. 271-303, p. 271.

⁷⁸ Emmanuel Mounier, *Liberté sous Conditions* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1946), p. 13.

Alongside the vogue of atheistic French existentialism in the mid-twentieth century, the Catholic revival movement operated as a sort of existentialist counter-force, whose influence and authority was not to be underestimated. Indeed, the magnitude of this movement serves to underpin the spread and depth of French Christian existentialism before the Second World War. Other notable figures in this context include René le Senne, Gabriel Marcel, and Louis Lavelle. In le Senne's second edition of his 1939 *Introduction à la philosophie*, his discussion of modern philosophy was divided into two sections entitled 'l'existentialisme allemand' and 'l'existentialisme français,' and it was in this second grouping that he placed his own philosophy. Incidentally, all his French examples were Christian.⁷⁹ Even after the Second World War, Christian existentialism maintained its position. In his 1946 study on existentialism *Que sais-je*, Jesuit Paul Foulquié moved through atheistic existentialism to Christian existentialism before concluding with the Christian 'existentialisme essentialiste' of Lavelle.⁸⁰ Given this strong Christian tradition of Christian existentialism in the twentieth century it is not surprising that the most significant Christian response to Sartre was not to contest existentialism as such *in toto*, but rather to argue for the validity of a specifically Christian existentialist approach. As Mounier put it: 'historically, existentialism is more often synonymous with Christian philosophy, transcendence and humanism, than atheism and despair'. Even if these two movements showed great divergence on metaphysical issues, they could nonetheless be considered as 'comrades in the same battle'.⁸¹

As will be explored in more detail shortly, Andersch readily embraced this positive outlook, which anticipated new certainties to replace those abolished by the radical scepticism of the moment. In an *FAZ* article from 1950 Andersch expressed his admiration for Bloy, whom he saw as a voice crying in the wilderness, and a precursor for writers like Péguy, Bernanos and Claudel. He also recognised Bloy's unorthodox mysticism as prefiguring Marxism and existentialism; he observes: 'Aber vorläufig redet er, Bloy, allein, ein wütender Mönch, in den Urwäldern des Unglaubens eine Lichtung für den Glauben'.⁸² Describing the route from the home

⁷⁹ René le Senne, *Introduction à la philosophie*, 2nd edition (Paris: Alcan, 1939), pp. 229-35.

⁸⁰ Paul Foulquié, *L'Existentialisme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1947).

⁸¹ Emmanuel Mounier, note, *Esprit* (December 1945), pp. 960-3.

⁸² Alfred Andersch, 'Léon Bloy vor den Türen', *FAZ*, 31 January 1950.

of the Maritains to that of Bloy in Montmartre, it becomes for Andersch a spiritual journey, and the Parisian names invoke for him a new intellectual awakening: ‘Banales Aufzählen von Namen!’, he explains, ‘Immerhin verbirgt sich darunter das geistige Feld, überzogen von spirituellen Linien und ihren Schnittpunkten, in dem der *renouveau catholique* zu kommen beginnt’.⁸³

As we will see in the following discussion, Andersch in his novels creates characters whose situation in life, and whose life crises, very much mirror not just Sartrean existentialism, but are also profoundly influenced by the theistic notions of fate and causality expressed by these more religiously inspired Catholic existentialist thinkers.

ANDERSCH’S NOVELS

In Andersch’s literary oeuvre, existentialist flight into freedom and retreat into the artistic world can be seen to constitute prevailing themes, and the author’s personal experiences are the source of inspiration for much of his writing. Even if his characters – anti-heroes, disillusioned, ironically broken Hamlet figures – aspire to, envision or carry out visions of flight that are each individual and diverse, these reveries of escape are fundamentally connected by the notion that man is entitled to such flight. In his prose, Andersch can be seen to continually accentuate the individual’s right to say ‘no’ – to liberate him- or herself from autocracy and control, to rebuff social constraints, and strive for radical new beginnings. Literature, for Andersch, plays a decisive role in securing this realm of individual freedom because literature becomes the place of dwelling for possibility and freedom, experimentality and uncertainty. As an existentialist form of self-encounter and self-liberation, Andersch claims that literature and art carry within themselves the possibility of breaking away from arduous political and private situations, even if just in imagination, and that they thereby permit individuals to disentangle themselves from falsity and repression and to develop alternatives. ‘Unsere Betrachtung,’ he writes:

⁸³ Ibid., p. 7.

hat das Ausmaß des Widerstandes erwiesen, das die deutsche Literatur gegen den Nationalsozialismus geleistet hat, eines Widerstandes, der nicht abgewertet werden sollte, nur, weil ihm der endgültige Erfolg versagt war. Sie hat aber auch nachgewiesen, daß dieser Kampf ein riesiges Maß an Kraft verzehrt, viele gesunde Tendenzen in die Isolation oder in Sackgassen der Form getrieben und eine ganze Generation geistig schöpferischer Menschen verbraucht hat. Aus diesen Gründen, wie aus dem Zwang einer völlig neuartigen Situation heraus, steht die junge Generation vor einer tabula rasa, vor der Notwendigkeit, in einem originalen Schöpfungsakt eine Erneuerung des deutschen geistigen Lebens zu vollbringen.⁸⁴

Offering the possibility of self-determination and freedom, literature becomes the accessory of flight, whilst never being escapist. To perform their task as a seismograph of society and as those who encourage alternatives to the status quo, post-war writers like Andersch, Hans Werner Richter, Günter Eich, Wolfdietrich Schnurre and Wolfgang Weyrauch,⁸⁵ as solitary individuals, can be seen to free themselves from social conventions and leap into the wilderness, the radically new. Andersch in particular can be seen to embrace the role of preserving the sphere of the non-identical and the penumbra in order to counter the collapse into self-sameness and conventionality.

The existentialist notion of the self and freedom through flight can be located in Andersch's works as early as his first novel, *Sansibar oder Der letzte Grund* (1957). The novel enjoyed a warm critical reception and was lauded as a work of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* which transcends its backdrop of 1937 Germany, safeguarding the freedom of the individual against totalitarian ideology.⁸⁶ It recounts the story of a group of people who in 1937 are haphazardly thrown together in the

⁸⁴ Andersch, 'Deutsche Literatur', p. 128.

⁸⁵ Weyrauch famously characterised this sense of radical literary duty as follows: 'In der gegenwärtigen deutschen Prosa sind mehrere Schriftsteller erschienen, die versuchen, unsre blinden Augen sehend, unsre tauben Ohren hörend und unsre schreienden Mäuler artikuliert zu machen.' Cf. Wolfgang Weyrauch (ed.), 'Nachwort', in *Tausend Gramm: Sammlung neuer deutscher Geschichten* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1949), p. 213.

⁸⁶ Cf. Horst Bingel, 'Überall ist Rerik', in *Deutsche Rundschau* 11 (1957), pp. 1208-1209; Eberhard Horst, 'Fluchtwege', in *Neue Deutsche Hefte* 45 (1958), pp. 70-71.

small coastal town of Rerik on the Baltic Sea. Ostensibly the work deals with escape from Nazi Germany, for each of the individuals have been affected in some way by Nazi persecution: Judith is Jewish, Knudsen's wife is threatened by the euthanasia programme, clergyman Helander represents the church and its accommodation with the regime, Gregor stands for the communist underground, and a statue by the artist Ernst Barlach, which the group seeks to rescue, symbolises spiritual freedom and *entartete Kunst*. Whilst Littler insists that Sartrean existentialism cannot function 'as an interpretative straightjacket' for the novel,⁸⁷ there can be little doubt that Andersch had such an intellectual framework in mind. Gregor, as a Soviet-trained KPD functionary, is sent to Rerik to pass Party directives to the remaining comrades in the town, but plans instead to use the opportunity to escape from Germany and his political involvement. His is essentially a flight from communist totalitarianism which can be interpreted in philosophical terms. Much like the 'Wildnis' of *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*, the novel I will be discussing in more detail later in the chapter, the muffled, deadly silence of Rerik becomes a scenario of existential choice. As Gregor reflects upon his arrival: 'War der tote Punkt der Ort, von dem aus man sein Leben ändern konnte?'⁸⁸ Demonstrably reminiscent of Orestes in Sartre's *Les Mouches*, Gregor becomes a defender of the oppressed in an act of emancipation, but refuses to take political advantage of the situation and ultimately remains in Germany. Whilst he recognises loyalty to communist ideology as a deplorable form of 'bad faith', he is unable to fathom the prospect of a life without ready-made standards and ideals, pondering: 'Konnte man ohne einen Auftrag leben?' (SG: 38). Knudsen similarly, as another disillusioned communist, is unable to understand the meaninglessness of life without the Party: 'Knudsen wollte gar nicht frei sein,' we read: 'er wollte resignieren, still werden, sitzen und schweigen' (SG: 84-5). Helander, who wishes to save the Barlach statue from the church, recognises the existential angst experienced by both Gregor and Knudsen, affirming that it is not fear of reprisal for resistance towards the regime, but a profound dread of deserting the only ideals which lend their lives significance (SG: 53). The figure of Helander denotes what Volker Wehdeking has identified as 'der neue christliche Existentialismus Anderschs', in which the absurd possibility of existence is

⁸⁷ Littler, *Andersch*, p. 184.

⁸⁸ Alfred Andersch, *Sansibar oder Der letzte Grund* (Olten/Freiburg: Walter, 1957), p. 38; subsequently abbreviated as SG.

rationalised in the momentary absence of God.⁸⁹ The Jewess Judith Lewin exemplifies in the novel the horror of objectification described by Sartre as ‘being for others’ or ‘être pour autrui’, having had an identity enforced on her by National Socialism: ‘Früher dachte ich, ich sei eine Deutsche,’ she says at one point. ‘Seitdem hat man mich zu einer Jüdin gemacht’ (SG, 100). Redolent of the identity crisis experienced by Max Frisch’s Stiller (*Stiller*) and the believed-to-be Jewish Andri (*Andorra*), Judith similarly has been deprived of her freedom of self-determination, which is man’s inalienable right and the only valid aim of the existential hero. It is only through confrontation with Judith’s existential dilemma that Gregor can fully comprehend his own privileged position:

Nur wir drei wollen weg – ich, der Klosterschüler, das Mädchen. Aber es ist ein Unterschied, dachte er plötzlich, zwischen mir und den beiden anderen. Ich will weg, aber sie müssen weg. Ich bin zwar bedroht, mit dem Konzentrationslager, mit dem Tod, aber ich kann trotzdem frei entscheiden, ob ich bleibe oder gehe. Ich kann wählen. (SG: 57)

Whilst *Sansibar* reveals clear strands and strains of Sartrean thinking, what can simultaneously be located in Andersch’s novel is a clear preoccupation with the theme of religious belief, and in particular, a palpable engagement with passages from Kierkegaard’s 1843 text *Repetition* (*Gjentagelsen*). Since the beginning of the war, clergyman Helander’s community, his church, and his house have become an empty, echoless space. For both Helander and Gregor, God has become a remote force. Reflecting on the white interior of the church, the young KPD functionary battles with his crisis of faith: ‘Das Weiß ist lebendig, [...] aber für wen lebt es? Für die Leere, für die Einsamkeit. [...] Die Leere, das Nichts. Kein Heiligtum. Diese Kirche ist zwar ein guter Treff, aber sie ist kein Heiligtum, das Schutz gewährt (SG: 49). The cleric Helander also prays ‘gegen die Leere an’ (SG: 9), and is tormented by the insufferable stillness. He remarks: ‘Die Stadt, die Kirche und das Pfarrhaus waren zu einem schalltoten, echolosen Raum geworden’ (SG: 89). Indeed, this omniscient *Nichts* is for him ‘die Hölle’ (SG: 139). Yet it is precisely at this juncture that one can pinpoint parallels with Kierkegaardian doctrine, specifically his

⁸⁹ Volker Wehdeking, *Alfred Andersch* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1983), p. 78.

deliberations on the Book of Job.⁹⁰ Like Helander, that righteous and prosperous Job believes that God would deliver the righteous from the evils in his present life, yet when confronted with suffering, he is thrown into a state of confusion and despair. Helander similarly doubts God (SG: 51), he scorns and derides Him (SG: 48/142), and rebels against Him (SG: 142-3). How Kierkegaard describes Job's quandary is a virtual mirror image of Helander's dilemma; he represents

the voice of the suffering, the cry of the grief-stricken, the shriek of the terrified, [...] a faithful witness to all the affliction and laceration there can be in a heart, an unfailing spokesman who dared to lament in bitterness of soul and to strive with God.⁹¹

The end of Job's story is also comparable to Helander's death scene. God speaks to Job in a great thunderstorm, and as it passes over Job is blessed and receives everything double that he had lost previously; as Kierkegaard explains: 'This is what is called repetition'⁹² ('Job er velsignet og har faaet alt dobbelt. Det kalder man en Gjentakelse'). For Helander there is no thunderstorm, but rather the sound of gunfire as he shoots at the Nazis who have come to arrest him. Angst-ridden by his moral predicament whether to shoot or be shot at, Helander experiences his decision-making as a Divine act, the release of the gun as a unique expression of the thunderous voice of God: 'Gott lässt mich schießen, weil er das Leben liebt' (SG: 144). In doing so, Helander receives, like Job, that which had previously gone awry – his personal understanding and love of God. This affirmation of God's existence comes to him in the very moment when it seems furthest from him. Here once again the words of Kierkegaard seem remarkably fitting:

Who would have thought of such an ending? *And yet*, no other *ending* is conceivable, even if this one also is inconceivable. When everything has ground to a halt, when thought ceases and speech is silenced, when explanation retreats in despair – then a thunderstorm is necessary.⁹³

⁹⁰ The Book of Job is one of the Writings of the Hebrew Bible, and the first poetic book in the Christian Old Testament.

⁹¹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, trans. Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 197.

⁹² Ibid. p. 214.

⁹³ Ibid. p. 229.

Andersch's thematic interest in Kierkegaardian thinking is aptly summarised in the following words by Anne Raabe: 'Die Parallele zu Kierkegaard hingegen ist wie fast immer bei Andersch erst auf den zweiten Blick ersichtlich und damit um so frappierender'.⁹⁴ What can in fact be located in Andersch's prose is, in addition to the mimicry of elements of Sartrean rational, an earnest and seemingly theistic deliberation on the absurd nature of God's existence.

Returning to discussions on the existentialist leitmotif of flight into self-fulfilment, this can be partly located in Andersch's second novel, *Die Rote* (1960). Here the female protagonist, Franziska, a 31-year old translator from Dortmund, flees from the conflicting demands of her marriage and an affair to Venice, where after becoming involved in the revenge of an Irish victim of Nazism against his former Gestapo interrogator, she finds the emotional fulfilment she seeks in a relationship with ex-communist musician Fabio Crepaz. Despite the immediate popular success of Andersch's 1960 novel, it was subject to considerable negative critical reception, the most ruinous of which denounced it as a descent into *Trivialliteratur*, with its 'whodunnit' elements, extravagant yachts and murder plot.⁹⁵ Andersch nevertheless defends the solemnity of his novel, emphasising the Italian Neo-Realistic elements in the work, but also the protagonist's existentialist deliberations on self-determination. In defence against the critics who objected to the timeworn happy ending, in which Franziska finds sanctuary in Fabio's family home in northern Italy, Andersch emphasises that this was intended as a consistent and logical conclusion of the protagonist's deliberations on freedom. For instance, her taking employment in a local soap factory constitutes, as Andersch argues, 'ein[e] existenziell[e] und grundlegend[e]' decision.⁹⁶ Franziska's act of self-determination can be seen to take place before the start of the novel when she encounters a *Grenzsituation* and abandons her husband. Elisabeth Plessen similarly describes Franziska's being alone in a foreign land, with no money, prospects or acquaintances as 'eine "situation" im

⁹⁴ Raabe, *Das Wort*, P. 139.

⁹⁵ Cf. Marcel Reich-Ranicki, *Deutsche Literatur in West und Ost Prosa seit 1945* (Munich: Piper, 1963), pp. 101-119.

⁹⁶ Horst Bienek, 'Alfred Andersch', in *Werkstattgespräche mit Schriftstellern* (Munich: Hanser, 1962), pp. 113-124, p. 123.

Sartreschen Sinne'.⁹⁷ Franziska's later visit to the tea-room in the luxury Hotel Pavone can be seen as a lapse into Sartrean 'bad faith', returning to the familiar world of her 'leichtes Dasein als Frau'.⁹⁸ Yet Littler is correct to doubt the consistency of the notion of existentialist freedom in this novel, claiming that Franziska's desertion of her husband does not constitute an altogether rational choice. For instance, her experiencing a *Grenzsituation* is 'wie [...] ein Gottesurteil' (DR: 16) which alludes to a predestined chain of causality and, indeed, a subject more commonly associated with the theistic existentialism of Catholic revivalists such as Mounier, Mauriac and Greene, as my later discussion will confirm. Littler similarly points out how Franziska's destination is the result of random selection. As such, her decision can hardly be deemed an authentic choice in an existential sense: 'Es ist wie im Roulette, ich habe auf Zero gesetzt und es ist eine Farbe herausgekommen. Irgendwohin hieß Zero. Herausgekommen war Venedig' (DR: 12).⁹⁹ Yet despite these critical reservations, the protagonist's admittedly polarised version of existential alternatives can nevertheless be seen to evoke a curiously Sartrean mode of thought; contrasting the freedom of 'l'être pour soi' against that of 'mauvaise foi', Franziska reaches the irrefutably existentialist conclusion: 'Es gibt nur zwei Möglichkeiten zu leben, ganz allein oder unter den Massen' (DR: 31).

In the 1974 novel *Winterspelt* one can locate, in contrast to in *Die Rote*, a notably sturdier Sartrean philosophical agenda. The work's title refers to its setting, a village in the Eifel close to the Belgian frontier, where German major Joseph Dincklage, confronted by the Americans towards the end of 1944 and convinced of the futility of further combat, plans to surrender his battalion with the assistance of schoolteacher Käthe Lenk, Czech communist Wenzel Hainstock and art historian Dr. Bruno Schefold. The latter of these, having salvaged a painting by Paul Klee from Nazi confiscation, undertakes to act as an intercessor in discussions with the American side, but he is detained and shot by German sentry Corporal Reidel who hopes thus to protect himself. The tragic futility of Schefold's death only becomes apparent when it is revealed that he is carrying Dincklage's message of withdrawal

⁹⁷ Elisabeth Plessen, 'In Freiheit flüchtig: Über die Frauengestalten in Alfred Anderschs Romanen', in *Interpretationen zu Alfred Andersch*, ed. Volker Wehdeking (Stuttgart: Klett, 1983), pp. 118-131, p. 120.

⁹⁸ Alfred Andersch, *Die Rote* (Olten/Freiburg: Walter, 1960), p. 53; subsequently abbreviated as DR.

⁹⁹ Cf. Littler, *Andersch*, pp. 207-213.

from the conspiracy, for which Schefold ultimately risks, and loses, his life. A passage from Sartre's 'Existentialism is a Humanism' is quoted in a footnote of Dincklage's letter:

Der Mensch ist zuerst ein Entwurf, der sich subjektiv lebt, anstatt nur ein Schaum zu sein oder eine Fäulnis oder ein Blumenkohl; nichts existiert vor diesem Entwurf; nichts ist im wahrnehmbaren Himmel, und der Mensch wird zuerst sein, was er zu sein geplant hat; nicht, was er sein will.¹⁰⁰

Critical interpretations of Dincklage's plan and its failure have been manifold. Ursula Reinhold's Marxist reading centres on the importance of Hainstock in the novel,¹⁰¹ whilst Max Walter Schulz stresses the positive depiction of Dincklage as indicative of Andersch's sympathy with the conservative, humanistic German middle class.¹⁰² A significant philosophical assessment is offered by Elisabeth Plessen, whose essay on the women characters in Andersch's writing draws particular attention to Käthe Lenk, as well as *Die Rote's* Franziska and *Sansibar's* Judith, as new manifestations of a well-established pattern of women aspiring to a specifically Sartrean mode of freedom: 'In existentieller Hinsicht ist ihre Grund- oder Ausgangsposition allemal dieselbe. Sie heißt: frei sein, Leben in Freiheit wählen'.¹⁰³ Considering Andersch's inclusion of a Sartrean quote in the novel, as well as Plessen's classification of Käthe Lenk, Franziska and Judith as existentialist heroines, Littler concedes that an existentialist reading of *Winterspelt* is 'not without reason',¹⁰⁴ and that there is little doubt that Andersch intended a straightforward identification of Dincklage's plan with Sartre's 'Entwurf' ('projet'). What these novels nevertheless accentuate is the need to exercise some scepticism when approaching Andersch through a solely Sartrean existentialist lens. According to Littler, Andersch's understanding of Sartre's text is 'somewhat superficial',¹⁰⁵ and she insists that Andersch obscures the significance of the word 'projet' as used by the French philosopher. According to Littler, Käthe is, in contrast to the figure of

¹⁰⁰ Alfred Andersch, *Winterspelt* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1974), p. 494.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Ursula Reinhold, 'Alfred Andersch: Winterspelt', in *Weimarer Beiträge* 2 (1977), pp. 136-143.

¹⁰² Cf. Max Walter Schulz, 'Mehr als "Polyphon umgrenztes Weiß": Alfred Andersch, Winterspelt', in *Interpretationen zu Alfred Andersch*, ed. Volker Wehdeking (Stuttgart: Klett, 1983), pp. 57-65.

¹⁰³ Elisabeth Plessen, 'In Freiheit flüchtig' p. 118.

¹⁰⁴ Littler, *Andersch*, p. 266.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Franziska, essentially a primarily instinctive woman, whose choices derive from the depths of her personality, as opposed to an existential insight into human freedom.

Die Kirschen der Freiheit, published as his second novel in 1952, alongside *Sansibar oder der letzte Grund*, is Andersch's most famous work and was a *succès de scandale* following its publication. This putative autobiographical report recounts the story of a young German who 'had impeccable credentials as a writer of the young generation: early opposition to National Socialism, a literary career which began after 1945 and was therefore uncompromised, and experiences of the war within Germany rather than from exile'.¹⁰⁶ Although *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* evidently has an autobiographical basis and is indeed subtitled *Ein Bericht*, the details described are highly selective. Certainly, no autobiography can or should include exhaustive detail, but the nature of the details which are excluded from Andersch's report are noteworthy. The word 'Bericht' implies a sober recitation of facts, an examination of these facts and, conceivably, the positing of a theory on future development based on that examination. According to Maggie Sargeant, Andersch's 'Bericht' lacks 'the dispassion which would normally be expected and the "facts" used to produce the analysis, which is itself often inconsistent, do not bear close scrutiny. The *Geschichte* created is not so much history as narrative bordering on the fictional. The omission of certain "truths" slant the *Geschichte*'.¹⁰⁷ Sargeant insists that Andersch's 'Bericht' is not factual reporting of a life or even of the most important factors which constitute this life, but instead the account which has rehabilitation as its dominant motive and which provides Andersch's fellow German countrymen with strategies for their own rehabilitation. Of the fifty-four 'Kriegsromane' studied by Jochen Pfeifer in his 1981 study *Der Deutsche Kriegsroman 1945 bis 1960*, he believes *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* to be the greatest success, precisely because of the narrow picture of the war which is depicted: 'Durch die konzentrierte Abhandlung einer speziellen, aber zentralen Problematik des Zweiten Weltkrieges stellt dieser Bericht inhaltlich den gelungensten Beitrag zur Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit dar'.¹⁰⁸ Pfeifer asserts that the

¹⁰⁶ Rhys Williams, 'Alfred Andersch', in *The Modern German Novel*, ed. by Keith Bullivant (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1987), pp. 57-71, p. 58.

¹⁰⁷ Maggie Sargeant, *Kitsch & Kunst: Presentations of a Lost War* (Bern: Lang, 2005), p. 105.

¹⁰⁸ Jochen Pfeifer, *Der Deutsche Kriegsroman 1945 bis 1960: Ein Versuch zur Vermittlung von Literatur und Sozialgeschichte* (Königstein im Taunus: Scriptor, 1981), p. 204.

‘Spannungsverhältnis zwischen Individuum und Gesellschaft’ releases Andersch from encumbrances such as the depiction of affiliations with senior officers and wartime brutalities and that this approach allows him to focus his attention on other more important issues. Like Sargeant, Hanjo Kesting upholds the assertion that Andersch omits considerable detail from his autobiographical report, but he nevertheless credits the writer’s positive intentionality – Andersch was not writing an autobiography in the traditional sense and the logical conclusion to this argument is that he should not be reprimanded simply because the work does not fit with the critics’ expectations. It must be accepted, Kesting insists, as existing outside the genre, as a one-off:

Er schreibt keinen Bildungs- oder Entwicklungsroman, sondern konzentriert sich auf die Augenblicke existentieller Entscheidung, die Stunde der Angst und die Stunde der Freiheit. Ein Buch mehr der abstrahierenden Selbstanalyse als des erzählenden Lebens. Es beweist viel Bekennerlust und Mut zur Selbstentblößung, aber vieles bleibt auch ausgespart: die Zeit, die Gesellschaft, die Menschen.¹⁰⁹

Significant here is the question of intentionality. In his biographical work on Andersch Stephan Reinhardt attests that the German writer considered his work to be an autobiography, but it also functioned as a vehicle through which to inform public opinion on the Adenauer government’s commitment to rearmament.¹¹⁰ Andersch, therefore, also considers *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* in terms of the socio-political situation in post-war Germany. As Kesting affirms, Andersch consciously bares a number of personal inadequacies in his work, but it is also true that some of his ‘confessions’ lack consistency. The details that are omitted say as much about Andersch’s personal and literary *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* as those which are actually contained within the work. For instance, there is no mention of Andersch’s half-Jewish wife and child, from whom he separated in 1937, and the period

¹⁰⁹ Hanjo Kesting, ‘Die Flucht vor dem Schicksal: Über den Schriftsteller Alfred Andersch’, in *Alfred Andersch, Text und Kritik* 61/62, Munich 1979, pp. 3-22, p. 12.

¹¹⁰ See Stephan Reinhardt, *Alfred Andersch: Eine Biographie* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1990), in which Andersch’s attitude towards *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* is outlined: ‘Der Erfolg von *Flucht in Etrurien* und die bald bevorstehende Wiedereinführung einer Pflichtarmee brachten ihn darauf [...] eine ganz persönliche Lebensbilanz zu ziehen’, p. 188, and ‘[D]ie Arbeit an den Kirschen – seiner Autobiographie, wie er immer betont [...] ging gut voran’, p. 189.

between 1933 and 1945 is covered very briefly with much of the narrative devoted to that period relating to his introversion and withdrawal from the political world into the aesthetic world. He identifies this withdrawal as an 'Emigration aus der Geschichte'¹¹¹ and as a protest against Nazism.

Some have understood Andersch's literary 'strategy of withdrawal', his emphasis upon the freedom and at least not direct political engagement of the writer, as a lack of engagement with social and political realities. For instance, Günter Grass sharply attacked Andersch following his acceptance speech for the Georg Büchner Prize in 1965 for his lack of political engagement and lack of direct support for Willy Brandt, the Social Democrats' candidate for the chancellorship.¹¹² In particular *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*, which will form the focus of the remainder this chapter, was regarded as a testimony to the de-politicisation of Andersch himself. Other scholars, such as Stephan Reinhardt, have argued that *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* remains an eminently political book: its publication coincided with the beginning of West German rearmament followed by West Germany's incorporation into NATO in 1955.¹¹³ Publishing a book in defence of the individual's decision to desert as a form of self-encounter and self-liberation was a form of indirect critique of an affluent West German society, where a collective focus on consumerism in the wake of an era of political restoration and rapid economic recovery swept aside concerns about the coming to terms with the National Socialist past and its crimes, and obscured questions of individual and collective guilt and responsibility.

¹¹¹ See Williams, 'Andersch', p. 61, who argues that Andersch's ardent support for 'innere Emigration' is based on the premise that such withdrawal or isolation is the equivalent of actual resistance.

¹¹² Grass' critique is interesting because, for Grass, as for many others, the notion of the free and independent writer, as Andersch endorsed it, is but a fiction and an evasion. In his reply to Grass, among other critics, which was printed in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (15 October 1965), Andersch maintained that his critique of society and state is embodied in his personal and literary journey and his work rather than in his engagement with a particular political party. Andersch appreciates however that he 'für dieses Verbrechen [...] die Diffamierung meines persönlichen und literarischen Wegs vom Konzentrationslager Dachau bis zu den "Kirschen der Freiheit" durch den Kollegen Grass in öffentlicher Sitzung der deutschen Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung in Darmstadt völlig verdient [habe]'.

¹¹³ Cf. Stephan Reinhardt, 'Ästhetik als Widerstand: Andersch als Bürger und engagierter Schriftsteller', in *Alfred Andersch*, ed. Irene Heidelberger-Leonard & Volker Wehdeking (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994), pp. 32-41.

In his 1952 memoir, ‘mit dem Andersch erstmals einer breiten Öffentlichkeit bekannt wurde’,¹¹⁴ Andersch recounts his experience as a soldier in the Second World War and his subsequent desertion in Italy, a moment that is depicted as pure, existential freedom and personal rebirth. The hero of this short autobiographical novel is Andersch himself. When the work first appeared, it was readily compared with Erich Maria Remarque’s autobiographical account *Nichts Neues im Westen* (1929), which had been a best-seller in the aftermath of the First World War.¹¹⁵ Andersch’s work is, however, not only far less brutal and less visceral, but also far more introspective than Remarque’s, and more politically critical in its depiction of Andersch’s gradual transformation from a faithful Marxist to an advocate of personal freedom – a conversion that earned the book almost as much denunciation as the act of desertion. The book begins with the execution of a communist partisan who had participated in the Spartacist uprising in Berlin during January of 1919. This incident is of profound significance for the adolescent narrator, and he becomes a confirmed communist at the age of sixteen, full of courage, optimism and commitment to the cause of liberating the oppressed. His activities lead to his imprisonment and later to the concentration camp at Dachau, where he undergoes a kind of ideological revelation: political engagement will solve nothing, not even in the totalitarian state that Germany had become after Hitler and the Nazis seized power: ‘Ich antworte auf den totalen Staat mit der totalen Introversion,’ the narrator writes (KDF: 46). Subjected to psychological examination and diagnosed with depression, Andersch’s protagonist is nevertheless drafted into the Germany army in 1943 and sent to the Italian front. There, on 6 June 1944, he deserts and surrenders to American troops about sixty miles north of Rome. In this act, he tastes for the first time what he describes as ‘die Kirschen der Freiheit’, the sweet moment of breath between contemplation and desire. As Christoph Nickenig observes: ‘Es ist der Moment, in dem man die Kirschen der Freiheit pflückt, die “frisch und herb” schmecken’.¹¹⁶

The work’s overarching thematic premise is that human beings can never be free for

¹¹⁴ Bernhard Jendricke, *Alfred Andersch* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1988), p. 63.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Michael Offizier, *Vom heldenhaften Führer zum einsamen Deserteur: Zum Wandel der Motive von Männlichkeit in der deutschen Kriegsliteratur* (Hamburg: Diplomica, 2012).

¹¹⁶ Christoph Nickenig, *Desastres de la guerra: Studien zum Bild des II. Weltkrieges im Roman* (Frankfurt a/M: Lang, 1996), p. 262.

more than a moment. But it is upon such moments of freedom, Andersch believes, that lives are founded: ‘Mein Buch hat nur eine Aufgabe: einen einzigen Augenblick der Freiheit zu beschreiben’ (KDF: 84). It is this single and singular moment of freedom – Andersch’s flight from the Germany Army on 6 June 1944 – that, Andersch asserts, gave his life meaning: ‘dass ich, [...] in einem bestimmten Augenblick die Tat gewählt habe, die meinem Leben Sinn verlieh und von da an zur Achse wurde, um die sich das Rad meines Seins dreht’ (KDF: 71). In deserting from the German army Andersch is breaking the bonds to his comrades and to his national community, as well as to the oath of allegiance he had sworn. However: ‘der Eid kann nur von Gläubigen einem Gläubigen gegenüber geleistet werden’ (KDF: 107); once an individual has freed him- or herself from belief, he or she is no longer bound by such oaths.

In exploring the intricacies of freedom and responsibility, Sartre develops the notion of ‘situation’ (Sartre calls his volumes of literary, political and philosophical essays that appeared from 1947 *Situations*), which has palpable echoes in Andersch’s 1952 novel. In Sartrean philosophy, a human being is not separable from the human condition. A person divorced from the totality of their situations is an intellectual abstraction that can only be partly achieved. Fundamentally the being is transcending a situation that is constricted by the body, the family, the social class, the country, the ethnicity, etc. What I make myself is inseparably bound up with my projects, with my surroundings as I take them to be. In essence, the situation is the material objective set of the human being’s life. It is something that cannot be avoided, changed, or gotten rid of. The for-itself is a being-in-situation. But this being-in-situation is a being that constantly acts upon his or her situation. This is the action of the for-itself as project, which Sartre describes as the paradox of freedom: ‘There is freedom only in a situation, and there is a situation only through freedom’.¹¹⁷ Sartre asserts that since consciousness *is* freedom, freedom *is* in a situation. Consciousness is in a body, and this body is its anchoring point in the world. It is its point of view in the world. Minimally then, the individual is situated in that point of view where his or her body is. Yet there is also an objective aspect of this situation, Sartre argues: an individual cannot help but be born in a male body, in

¹¹⁷ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 629.

a working-class family, in Canada, in the twenty-first century. However, it is he who determines the meaning of this situation. This is what allows Sartre to say that the situation exists through freedom: the individual's free consciousness gives meaning to the situation into which he or she is born. In doing so, the human being is in a position to transcend and surpass the situation. The situation is thus not entirely determining of the person's being.

In Sartrean existentialism, human being and human situation form a mutually dependent totality. The relations between a human being and his or her situation are dialectical or reciprocal. The situation presents the agent with a range of possibilities. The agent acts to realise some of these possibilities and this action alters the situation and thereby presents a new range of possibilities. Agency constitutes both the agent and the situation. The situation only exists as a situation for some agent. The agent only exists as an agent in some situation, so to be in a situation is to choose oneself in a situation. It follows that the relation between agent and situation is very close. The reciprocal relation is not only causal, nor is it only constitutive. Agent and situation may only be adequately understood as two aspects of one reality. Sartre does not express it this way, but it is as though the agent is inside of the situation and the situation is the outside of the agent. Thus in order to reconcile this dialectic relation between agent and environment with Sartre's absolute libertarianism one must invoke his distinction between freedom and power. Although our freedom is absolute, our power is limited. Although there is no situation in which we do not have a choice, there is no situation which does not limit our power, a notion which Sartre explains in his 1947 essay 'La Liberté Cartésienne' in *Situations I*.¹¹⁸ Here he insists that the situation of a person and their powers can neither increase nor limit their freedom. Although what one can do is limited by where, as well as who or when one is, that one can do something rather than nothing is in no way affected. The individual retains the dispositional property of being a choosing agent even though the choices one might exercise vary from situation to situation. Clearly some choices may be unpleasant or difficult but, logically, an unpleasant choice is nevertheless a choice. In this sense, the expression 'I had no choice' is nonsensical.

¹¹⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'La Liberté Cartésienne', in *Situations I* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), pp. 314-35.

These Sartrean notions concerning situations and absolute choices also evoke certain Jasperian existentialist concepts, most crucially, the theory of limit situations (*Grenzsituation*), and their function as unconditioned *moments* or *situations* of human existence. A Jasperian *Grenzsituation*, as outlined in his *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (1919),¹¹⁹ describes an exceptional states of existence, which shows when individuals face the unconditioned (*das Unbedingte*), a deductive and existentialist limit for all forms of rational, practical or experimental orientation, in particular modes of angst or experience their actual situation in the light of death and illness. It can imply that one puts into question one's perceptual schemes, the implicitness of one's daily routine, and so forth. According to this theory, a *Grenzsituation* can be understood as the unconditioned *Augenblick* of human reality, in which reason is drawn by intense impulses or imperatives, which impel it to expose itself to the absolute limits of its consciousness and to seek higher or more reflected modes of knowledge. The *Unbedingte*, a term transported from Kantian doctrines of synthetic regress,¹²⁰ is thus proposed by Jaspers as a vital impetus in reason, in which reasons encounters its form as conditioned or limited and desires to transcend the limits of this form.

The following utterance from the narrator in *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* clearly reveals how these Sartrean and Jasperian positions on moments and absolute choices are being echoed, namely that 'life has no meaning a priori,' since 'it is up to us to give it meaning,' as Sartre remarks; 'value is nothing else than the meaning we choose'.¹²¹

Mein Buch hat lediglich die Aufgabe, darzustellen, dass ich in einem bestimmten Augenblick die Tat gewählt habe, die meinem Leben Sinn verlieh, und die von da an zur Achse wurde, um die sich das Rad meines Seins dreht. (KDF: 71)

¹¹⁹ Karl Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (Berlin: Springer, 1945), cf. in particular chapter one.

¹²⁰ Cf. Emmanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1919), pp. 300-347.

¹²¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, trans. Bernhard Frechtmann & Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), p. 49.

As Koberstein observes, this notion of ‘einem bestimmten Augenblick’, i.e. the moment in which he decided to flee from his comrades, reiterates the Sartrean and Jasperian notions of situation and *Augenblick* and the absolute freedom these both entail.¹²² Koberstein writes: ‘Freiheit steht immer in Bezug zu etwas Gegebenem, das durch die Realisierung der Freiheit als Versuch, sich dem Sein zu entziehen, genichtet wird’.¹²³ Indeed, this ‘Gegebene’ signifies human life in a particular historical situation, in this instance the protagonist’s decision to flee. Also significant is the protagonist’s insistence that this weighty momentary decision was philosophically consistent and based on rational insights: ‘Ich aber war stolz auf meinen die Unterscheidungen mit leidenschaftlicher Kälte treffenden Kopf’ (KDF: 25); ‘ich hatte die bessere Einschätzung der Lage’ (KDF: 67), ‘ich zog also aus meiner politischen Situation die Konsequenzen’ (KDF: 73-4), and ‘ich, obwohl nur ein “einzelner Soldat”, besaß “solche hohe Einsicht” samt dazugehöriger metaphysischer als auch rationaler Verantwortung [...]. Ich hatte beschlossen, davonzulaufen. Es war eine klare Sache’ (KDF: 74). The fact that Andersch offers a variety of reasons for his narrator’s decision to desert shows his awareness of the over-simplification involved in a purely philosophical argument. The motivating forces include residual allegiance to communism, political rejection of the concept of unconditional surrender, fear of dying a futile death, and a somewhat vague ‘Anarchie-Gefühl’ (KF: 72). Yet the overwhelmingly Sartrean tone remains unmistakable, with its challenge to traditional values and concern for the freedom of the reader. Above all, the only genuine freedom recognised is that experienced in a *Grenzsituation*, an ‘Augenblick’ of completely autonomous decision, based on personally defined values. In keeping with Sartrean and Jasperian doctrine, the constant dialectic of the alternating forces of environmental circumstances and free will dictates that freedom is never more than a momentary experience.

Yet while expounding such basic tenets of Sartrean and Jasperian existentialism, Andersch can nevertheless be seen to contravene them in practice. For instance, Andersch praises Sartre’s successful demonstration of his ‘situation’ theory concerning individual decisions, which Andersch locates in *Les Mouches*: ‘Sartre

¹²² Koberstein, *Gott oder das Nichts*, p. 171.

¹²³ Ibid.

lesend empfand ich das Gefühl von einer herannahenden Veränderung. Ihr Wesen konnte ich nicht erkennen. Aber wie habe ich, den dritten Akt der *Fliegen* lesend, darum gebangt, dass Sartre in ihm die Tat des Orest zurücknehmen würde, dass Orest überwältigt würde von den göttlichen Argumenten Jupiters'.¹²⁴ Here the impression given is one of a situation in which the outcome is dependent entirely on individual choices which are in no way pre-determined. This, however, cannot be said for *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*, in which the very subheading 'Der unsichtbare Kurs' carries with it the implication of an inevitable causal chain of events. As Littler observes: 'The decision to desert is shown to have infused not only his future, but also his past life with meaning, as suggested by the image of the hub in the wheel of existence'.¹²⁵

Developing this point of contravention of Sartrean thinking, let us look closer at the notions of predetermination and fate (*Schicksal*), which in *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* form an integral part of Andersch's philosophical stance. Koberstein is in agreement that "'Schicksal" [ist] von zentraler Bedeutung'¹²⁶ in the work, yet, in a Sartrean existentialist sense, it constitutes the very antithesis of the concept of freedom: 'Man ist überhaupt niemals frei, außer in den Augenblicken, in denen man sich aus dem Schicksal herausfallen lässt' (KDF: 126). This radically contradicts Sartre's premise: 'There is no determinism, man is free, man is freedom, [...] man is condemned to be free'.¹²⁷ Furthermore, the term 'fate' does not exist anywhere in Sartrean doctrine. For Andersch, fate constitutes the absolute determination of the individual, from which he can selectively free himself; thus he writes: 'Aber es ist unmöglich, sich für länger als einen Tag aus dem Schicksal der Massen zu befreien' (KDF: 123). For this reason, the 'Kampf des Menschen gegen das Schicksal' takes place 'in Akten der absoluten Freiheit' (KDF: 127) in which the individual 'sich gegen das Schicksal wendet und neues Schicksal setzt' (KDF: 126).

It is at this juncture that subtle thematic parallels with the philosophical positions associated with the Catholic renewal movements in France and England can be

¹²⁴ Alfred Andersch, 'Der Seesack: Aus einer Autobiographie', in *Das Alfred Andersch Lesebuch*, ed. Gerd Haffmans (Zurich: Diogenes, 1979), pp. 83-101, p. 97.

¹²⁵ Littler, *Andersch*, p. 89.

¹²⁶ Koberstein, *Gott oder das Nichts*, p. 172.

¹²⁷ Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, p. 41.

located. Circumnavigating Sartrean doctrine, Andersch's treatment of the concept of *Schicksal* seems remarkably more akin to the theistic positions of French reformists Emmanuel Mounier and François Mauriac as well as the English Catholic novelist Graham Greene, for whom the notions of predestination and transcendent destiny are central concerns.

In his philosophy of theistic personalism,¹²⁸ Emmanuel Mounier contends that human beings have an innate responsibility to take an active role in history, even while their ultimate goal is beyond the temporal and beyond human history. Personalism, as a sort of spiritualised existentialism, revolted against both capitalism and communism, and advocates like Mounier, Maritain and Mauriac suggested that individuals have intrinsic value because they were created in God's image; they were ends in themselves, fulfilled through community. Mounier in particular contends that each individual has a special destiny in the world related to the eternal, to the Kingdom of God, which begins here and now. His philosophical works have centred on the mystery of freedom and God's grace, free will and personal responsibility, and the destiny of people in the world. His thinking furthermore sought to convince humanity that it deserved to be loved and sought by the divine, bound by a transcendent destiny that presupposed a transcendent God.

Fate is also a predominant theme in the novels of fellow Catholic revivalist François Mauriac. Typically set in the rather desolate countryside of his native Bordeaux region, Mauriac's works are chiefly concerned with the sins of the flesh and the torments of souls torn between good and evil, between the presence of temptation and the apparent absence of God. Mauriac's style was much praised for its detached classicism even when dealing with passionate or tormented themes, as was his ability to recreate the brooding and claustrophobic atmosphere of the provinces which mirrors the spiritual entrapment and pattern of destiny of his characters. An exemplary case here is Mauriac's best-known work *Thérèse Desqueyroux* of 1927.¹²⁹ Thérèse can be regarded as an existentialist heroin, some decades before this term became fashionable, anxiously trying to make sense of herself and her

¹²⁸ Emmanuel Mounier, *Personalism*, trans. Philip Mairet (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1952).

¹²⁹ François Mauriac, *Thérèse Desqueyroux* (Paris: Grasset, 1927).

actions in a world overwhelmingly alien to her. She is a young woman of passion and guilt, shackled by the social conventions of a respectable marriage. Much like Andersch's protagonist prior to his escape, the despairing Thérèse finds herself in existentialist dilemma, a Jasperian *Grenzsituation*, in which she is driven, for reasons that are not wholly clear, to make an absolute choice poison her husband Bernard with the medicine he is prescribed for his illness. The attempt fails and she is condemned to a life of disgrace and humiliation from which there is no escape. After the trial, during which her husband lies to defend her innocence, she returns with him and her child to the remote town of Argelouse, a symbolic landscape of unrelieved pines emblematic of the protagonist's isolation and loneliness. Branded by her external family and husband as a wicked woman, she is placed under house arrest, and not even allowed to tend to her own child. She is only free to attend Sunday mass, yet she remains troubled by the church's impersonal sermons on issues of dogma and morality, and consequently decides to never return to confession or communion. It is only after her father's negotiations with the family following her suffering an anorexic illness during her period of imposed solitary confinement that she is allowed to flee for Paris, the 'Augenblick' which confirms her freedom and, concurrently, harks back to the theme of existentialist flight as an autonomous, life-affirming act that epitomises *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*.

The victim of a hostile fate, Thérèse, as Mauriac said of her, 'belongs to that class of human beings [...], for whom night can end only when life itself ends. All that is asked of them is that they should not resign themselves to night's darkness'.¹³⁰

Mauriac's characters are generally passive, allowing destiny to decide their fate for them. They rarely if ever actually 'choose' good or evil; rather, a transcendent force imposes these upon them. It was precisely this notion of fate that prompted later generations, most notably Jean-Paul Sartre, to criticise Mauriac's characters of being trapped and predestined in a quasi-Calvinist universe with none of the authentic freedom of choice which was a pre-requisite of the existentialist view of the human condition. Sartre specifically berated Mauriac's ambiguous use of third-person

¹³⁰ François Mauriac, *Thérèse: A Portrait in Four Parts*, trans. Gerard Hopkins (New York: Farrar, 1947), p. 190.

narration, branding it a poor example of authorial omniscience; at times ‘she’ reveals her own thoughts, at others ‘she’ is judged and given a destiny. Sartre writes:

Mauriac [...] passes from Thérèse-subject to Thérèse-object within the same sentence. [...] Who here is judging Thérèse to be a ‘careful but desperate woman?’ It cannot be she herself. No, it is M. Mauriac, it is myself. We have the Desqueyroux dossier in our hands, and we pronounce judgement upon her.¹³¹

As John O’Neill observes: ‘Characters whose life is congealed in the gaze of the author are essentially reduced to *things* which have a *destiny* but no life that the reader can share from the inside’.¹³² Sartre regarded this portrayal of predestination and, by inference, entrapment of the protagonist as an unfit subject for a valid novel, since the protagonist is evidently unable to exercise free will. The implication of a predestined causal chain of events nevertheless has strong echoes in Andersch’s 1952 novel.

Another writer to explore this philosophical concept, for whom Andersch repeatedly expressed admiration in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* and *Europäische Avantgarde*, is English writer Graham Greene. Greene draws on the same narrative techniques as those employed by his French revivalist contemporaries in his four so-called Catholic novels *Brighton Rock* (1939), *The Power and the Glory* (1940), *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) and *The End of the Affair* (1951). All Greene’s Catholic novels have open endings; the characters are left in a state of uncertainty with regard to their salvation. Like his French contemporaries, Graham Greene does not use divinely omniscient narrators in these four novels. What is also striking in this regard is the decisively modern representation of God’s presence in Greene’s writing. In *The Power and the Glory*, God is effectively silent, a passive force, and the attention is rededicated to the human perspective of the individual believer. Greene’s non-omniscient narrative mode in internal focalisation means that God can

¹³¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘*Francois Mauriac and Freedom*’, in *Situations I*, trans. Annette Michelson (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), pp. 44, pp. 41—52.

¹³² John O’Neill, ‘Situation and Temporality’, in *The Debate Between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), pp. 315-326, p. 318.

only be described from the human perspective, yet it nevertheless underscores an unambiguous communication between man and the Divine force, whose direct intervention in the world is palpable.

The notion of predestination again forms the thematic backbone of Greene's 1940 novel *The Power and the Glory*, in which the protagonist and focaliser is a Catholic priest of the most disreputable and soiled character. Residing in the Southern Mexican state of Tabasco in the 1930s, Greene's protagonist suffers at the hands of the Mexican government who seek to suppress the Catholic Church. Indeed the squalid priest is the only representative of his church left in the remote state from which ecclesiastical practices and persons have been banished on pain of death. Before the persecution the unnamed 'whisky priest' was full of ambition and pride, and during the years of oppression and moral disintegration, the mortal sins of despair and pitiful cravenness lead him to break the vow of celibacy and father an illegitimate child.

Yet Greene's Catholic antihero is still an ordained priest: 'It doesn't matter so much my being a coward—and all the rest. I can put God into a man's mouth just the same—and I can give him God's pardon'.¹³³ In spite of his personal inadequacies, the priest sees himself as chosen by Divine grace to continue his clandestine sacramental service among the Catholics of the state. He repeatedly alludes to God's will during the course of action. In a state of existential despair, the priest, again evocative of Andersch's deserter in *Die Kirschen*, experiences a Jasperian *Grenzsituation* as a moment of absolute choice, and attempts to flee from his situation to Vera Cruz, but fails to catch the boat because he is asked to attend to an ailing woman. In hindsight the priest looks upon this interruption as God's will: 'I shall miss it, [...]. I am meant to miss it'.¹³⁴ He declares several times that it is his duty not to be caught until God decides otherwise.¹³⁵ And when he is finally captured and incarcerated his reflections in free indirect speech express clearly his conviction that his destiny has always been in God's hands:

¹³³ Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory* (London: William Heinemann & The Bodley Head, 1971), p. 234.

¹³⁴ Ibid. p. 13.

¹³⁵ Ibid. p. 43, 68, 90.

If God intended him to escape He could snatch him away from in front of a firing squad. But God was merciful. There was only one reason, surely, which could make Him refuse His peace—if there was any peace—that he could still be of use in saving a soul, his own or another's. But what good could he do now? [...] He didn't sleep again: he was striking yet another bargain with God. This time, if he escaped from the prison, he would escape altogether. He would go north, over the border. His escape was so improbable that, if it happened, it couldn't be anything else but a sign—an indication that he was doing more harm by his example than good by his occasional confessions.¹³⁶

At a later juncture in the novel the priest is approached by a *mestizo*, an untrustworthy and deceitful man who is pursuing the reward money offered for the priest's identification and arrest. The priest observes that 'it seemed as if God were deciding',¹³⁷ and as the *mestizo* does not deceive him, the priest concludes that 'God had decided. He had to go on with life' (PG, 165). In keeping with his agreement with God the priest travels north and crosses the border, only to find that the same man has divulged his whereabouts to the police, an incident which the priest looks upon as being part of God's divine plan: The *mestizo* is Judas and he was predestined to betray him. Thus the betrayal, his imprisonment and execution are all experienced by the priest as individual acts of fate.

As mentioned above, one of the most unique aspects of Greene's novel is the apparent silent nature of God. The priest is in reality left to his own judgement, and in the human perspective everything becomes complex and contradictory. He reflects, again in free indirect speech, on the inherent paradox of mortal sin:

You only had to turn up the underside of any situation and out came scuttling these small absurd contradictory situations. He had given way to despair—and out of that

¹³⁶ Ibid. pp. 154-158.

¹³⁷ Ibid. p. 163.

had emerged a human soul and love—not the best love, but love just the same. (PG, 118)

Choice is inevitably accompanied by ambiguity and doubt. In another passage of free indirect speech the priest faces the insoluble dilemma, which again has echoes of the existential quandary experienced by Andersch's narrator - Should he leave or stay?:

Had it become his duty then to run away? [...]. If he left them, they would be safe, and they would be free from his example [...]. But it was from him too they took God – in their mouths. When he was gone it would be as if God in all the space between the sea and the mountains ceased to exist. Wasn't it his duty to stay, [...] even if they were murdered for his sake? Even if they were corrupted by his example? He was shaken with the enormity of the problem. (PG, 74)

Like the novels of his French contemporaries, Greene's does not end in pessimism. Rather, it portrays a character who senses his fate as inextricably linked to a fallen world, only to have this *other* fate break into the world's fatality to create a new fate – a destiny.

Whilst parallels can be drawn between Greene's and Andersch's thematic engagement with the theme of predestination, the novel also explores another facet of fate, namely individual fate, which determines the life of singular beings, i.e. social setting, parentage, etc.¹³⁸ Andersch also speaks of a collective fate, which can be equated with the term 'Geschichte', to which all human individuals living in an era of pre-determined social requirements belong. Andersch's concern that the individual should not be submerged in a collective is something that notably pervades the philosophy of Sartre's partner, Simon de Beauvoir, in particular, as well as that of Mounier and French Christian philosopher Simone Weil.¹³⁹ In *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*, Andersch describes this collective fate as powerlessness of

¹³⁸ Cf. KDF 17: 'Er wusste, dass meine Mutter Augenblicke hatte, in denen sie ihr Schicksal bis zum Überdruß erfüllte.'

¹³⁹ For Simone Weil, 'the proper functioning of the intelligence demands complete freedom, implying the right to deny everything, and refuses denomination', cf. Simone Weil, *Waiting on God (Attente de Dieu)*, trans. Emma Craufurd (London: Routledge, 1951), p. 29.

the individual in a totalitarian state who lies at the mercy of higher powers. The extent of this limitation of personal freedom by state oppression is elucidated in the following statement, where the protagonist describes the political situation shortly before he takes flight:

Sie hatten meine revolutionäre Jugend erstickt. Sie hatten mich ins Konzentrationslager gesperrt, [...] die Genossen meiner Jugend getötet. [...] So haben sie die Kommunistische Partei verdorben. [...] Indem sie die Partei verdarben, haben sie dem Kampf meiner Jugend den Sinn genommen und mich in die Introversion getrieben. [...] Ich hatte nur die Ästhetik der Kunst und mein Privatleben, und das zerstörten sie durch Gestellungsbefehle.
(KDF: 72)

The protagonist's above description of his fully determined situation also has echoes of the basic tenets of Mounier's personalism, in particular the notions of political commitment and freedom. As Mounier explains in his philosophical volume, the pure, capitalist ideal of the acquisitive, self-interested individual, struggling for survival in a world governed by abstract economic laws or profit and loss, can scarcely provide a context in which spiritual values and the idea of individual freedom can flourish,¹⁴⁰ a position to which Andersch's protagonist in the above citation readily testifies. Depicting himself as a victim of historical circumstances, Andersch's narrator is seen in this regard to contradict the Sartrean premise that man, 'from the moment that he is thrown into this world, [...] is responsible for everything he does'.¹⁴¹ There are no excuses, and there can be no opportunity to blame it on circumstances being out of one's favour,¹⁴² as Andersch's protagonist does.

The fear of the *Staatsmechanismus* that Andersch's protagonist faces leads to, as Alfons Bühlmann explains, an 'Entleerung des Daseins' and to estrangement from one's fellow beings.¹⁴³ Early in the novel the young protagonist remarks: 'immer

¹⁴⁰ Mounier, *Personalism*, pp. 103-104.

¹⁴¹ Sartre, *ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁴³ Alfons Bühlmann, *In der Faszination der Freiheit: Eine Untersuchung zur Struktur der Grundthematik im Werk von Alfred Andersch* (Berlin: Schmidt, 1973), pp. 11.

wieder wehrt sich etwas in mir gegen das Wort “Massen” (KDF: 33). Later he utters that comrades seem ‘wie Gebannte mit einem Trieb zum einfachen Aufgehen im Massenschicksal’ (KDF: 100-101). He regards their presence as a further constraint on his freedom: ‘Sie kotzen mich regelrecht an [...]. Kameradschaft, das bedeutete, dass man niemals allein war’ (KDF: 63). Appearing to confirm this hostile position, Sartre describes the function of the ‘other’ as follows:

The other is indispensable to my existence, and equally so to any knowledge I can have of myself. The intimate discovery of myself is at the same time the revelation of the other as a freedom which confronts mine, and which cannot think or will without doing so either for or against me.¹⁴⁴

Simone de Beauvoir similarly notes in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (*Pour une morale de l’ambiguïté*):

It is not true that the recognition of the freedom of others limits my own freedom: to be free is not to have the power to do anything you like; it is to be able to surpass the given toward an open future; the existence of others as a freedom defines my situation and is even the condition of my own freedom.¹⁴⁵

What we can draw from this is that Andersch allows his narrator to be defined in opposition to the other. This is most clearly apparent in the scene in the novel where the protagonist encourages his comrades to go on without him under the pretence that he needs to repair his bicycle tire. In a state of moral uncertainty, the protagonist wonders whether he should convince his fellow soldiers to flee with him, yet this process of self-questioning is resolved by an ever-stronger appeal to the importance of making one’s own decision. In this way, Andersch, Sartre and de Beauvoir can all be seen to indissolubly link freedom with the ‘other.’ For these writers and philosophers, freedom is always lived, that is, embodied and expressed, within an

¹⁴⁴ Sartre, *ibid.*, pp. 26-28. See also *Huis Clos* for a philosophical examination of the relationship between the ‘other’ and individual freedom.

¹⁴⁵ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Citadel, 1996), p. 91.

inter-subjective context. The significance of the ‘other’ also underscores a point of thematic crossover with the theistic existentialist thinking of Emmanuel Mounier, for whom reciprocity is a necessary part of individual freedom. The French Catholic revivalist is certainly critical of certain aspects of the Sartrean position, in particular his contention that individual freedom can only have a relationship of dominance or subservience to that of the ‘other’. Mounier rather views this version of individualised freedom, confronting a hostile world, as a self-defence mechanism and a block in communication leading to egocentricity and alienation. Yet Mounier is evidently aligned with Andersch, Sartre and de Beauvoir in the belief that the ‘other’ remains an indispensable facet in individual freedom which, he contends, should lead to an opening out towards others and a concern for ‘general freedom’; Mounier writes that in an individual’s inner experience:

the person is a presence directed towards the world and other persons, mingled among them in universal space. Other persons do not limit it, they enable it to be and to grow. The person only exists thus towards others, it only knows itself in knowing others, only finds itself in being known by them.¹⁴⁶

Far from leading to isolation, man’s freedom should unite him with other men, and because the existence of others has a positive effect on him, they enable him to transcend himself, as Mounier explains: ‘Thus the positive interpersonal relation is a reciprocal provocation, a mutual fertilisation’.¹⁴⁷

Andersch’s thematic preoccupation with the ‘other’ is upheld throughout the course of the novel. At a later juncture he presents the ‘other’ as a submissive mass, which follows a ‘Herdeninstinkt’ (KDF: 100). For Andersch, the ‘other’ ‘[ist] nicht nur der Mitmensch, [...] sondern der ganz andere, den man niemals kennen kann’ (KDF: 71). Indeed, it is precisely that which sets them and him off as ‘other’ against one another, again evoking the Sartrean position on inter-subjectivity: ‘he man who discovers himself directly in the cogito also discovers all the others,

¹⁴⁶ Mounier, *Personalism*, pp. 18-19.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 23.

and discovers them as the condition of his own existence. He recognises that he cannot be anything [...] unless others recognise him as such. [...] It is in this world that man has to decide what he is and others are'.¹⁴⁸ Andersch's protagonist can only experience freedom in juxtaposition to the mass: 'Das Schicksal der Massen vollendete sich, als ich mich für die Dauer eines Tages von ihm löste'.¹⁴⁹

KIERKEGAARD AND DIE KIRSCHEN DER FREIHEIT

Of course French existentialism is not the only existentialist influence on Andersch; Søren Kierkegaard is arguably no less important. With the exception of Anne Raabe's 1999 momentous study *Das Wort stammt von Kierkegaard: Alfred Andersch und Søren Kierkegaard*, little has been written about the Dane's influence on Andersch's literary oeuvre. There are two possible reasons for this. Firstly, it is primarily Jean-Paul Sartre's influence that has been the subject of interest, as aforementioned studies by Plessen (1983), Jendricke (1988), Littler (1991), Wehdeking (1994), Heidelberger-Leonhard (1986/1994), and Koberstein (1996) demonstrate. Secondly, Andersch's allusions to Kierkegaard are both rare and sporadic. The Dane's influence in Andersch's writing is hence more 'hidden and unassuming, surfacing in subtle allusions or permeating the work as a whole rather than consisting in direct references, quotations, or explicitly stated ideas'.¹⁵⁰ In reference to this latter point, it is useful to begin by surveying precisely where some of these Kierkegaardian references appear. Whilst Raabe acknowledges in her study that 'es von Andersch nur spärliche Hinweise auf Kierkegaard [gibt]', she nevertheless identifies how Andersch 'den [Kierkegaardischen] Begriff der ästhetischen Existenz als ein zu überwindendes Stadium begreift'.¹⁵¹ Indeed, in his essay 'Thomas Mann als Politiker', Andersch refers to Mann as 'der Romancier', for whom 'die ästhetische Existenz sich nicht selbst genug [ist]'.¹⁵² In the same

¹⁴⁸ Sartre, *ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁴⁹ This assertion does not correspond to Sartre's meaning of the 'other' as suggested in his assertion 'Hell is other people' (*Huis Clos*).

¹⁵⁰ Alina Vaisfeld, 'Alfred Andersch: Reading Søren Kierkegaard as a Flight to Freedom', in *Kierkegaard's Influence on Literature, Criticism and Art*, ed. Jon Bartley Stewart (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 1-14, p. 1.

¹⁵¹ Anne Raabe, *Das Wort*, p. 11.

¹⁵² Alfred Andersch: 'Thomas Mann als Politiker', in *Die Blindheit des Kunstwerks und andere Aufsätze* (Zürich: Diogenes, 1979), pp. 9-27, p. 11.

essay Andersch employs the phrase ‘Sein zum Tode’,¹⁵³ which evokes Kierkegaard’s 1849 text *The Sickness Unto Death* (*Sygdommen til Døden*). As Raabe observes, this allusion functions as ‘ein weiteres Indiz für die Selbstverständlichkeit, in der Andersch mit Kierkegaards Begriffen umgegangen ist’.¹⁵⁴ Andersch explicitly references Kierkegaard in a 1946 article entitled ‘Die Leidenschaft der Unterscheidung’, in which he pronounces: ‘Das Wort stammt von Kierkegaard. Er meint damit jene Grundqualität menschlichen Denkens, die in das Denken überhaupt erst Qualität bringt: die Fähigkeit Nuancen zu finden’.¹⁵⁵ A profound indebtedness to the Danish philosopher is likewise traceable in Andersch’s essay series *Europäische Avantgarde* of 1948, in one essay of which he writes: ‘Kierkegaards “Leidenschaft der Unterscheidung” ist eine alte europäische Leidenschaft – wir wollen sie üben’.¹⁵⁶

As the following section of this chapter shall attempt to illustrate, Kierkegaardian philosophy, most notably his concepts of the aesthetic and ethical stages of existence, forms a sturdy, if not the sturdiest existentialist backdrop against which to approach Andersch’s 1952 novel. This hypothesis is readily supported by Raabe who asserts that Kierkegaardianism ‘stellt, [...], in unzähligen Fällen ein Erklärungsmodell dar für Anderschs Charaktere und Problemstellungen’.¹⁵⁷ The Dane’s influence is of remarkable scope, and the changes that Andersch’s notion of escape into freedom undergoes – from the notion of freedom as the dream of absolute self-determination to a more socially grounded understanding of freedom – are better understood when mapped onto the development from the aesthetic to the ethical sphere as described by Kierkegaard. Retrospectively, the protagonist’s desertion on the Italian front in 1944 can be seen as the point of culmination of a string of dreams, visions and short episodes of freedom and escape experienced in childhood and youth. His decision to desert, to break away from one’s old way of life and to leap into the new thereby becomes the moment of precipitation of an individual self.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁵⁴ Raabe, *ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Alfred Andersch, ‘Die Leidenschaft der Unterscheidung’, *Der Ruf*, 1. October 1946.

¹⁵⁶ Alfred Andersch (ed.), *Europäische Avantgarde*, p. 9.

¹⁵⁷ Raabe, *Das Wort*, p. 12.

We might begin this discussion by noting how the act of desertion comes to *define* the soldier, both who he was in the past and who he will be in the future. A decision innately reveals the kind of person that one is to become. As Alina Vaisfeld observes, it becomes ‘the litmus test for designating the kind of person that is also only formed in the very act of deciding’.¹⁵⁸ By emphasising the revelatory function of the act of decision, Andersch espouses a viewpoint that comes close to that expressed by Kierkegaard’s Judge Vilhelm, who in *Either/Or* raises the question: ‘Are you not aware that there comes a midnight hour when everyone must unmask; do you believe that life will always allow itself to be trifled with; do you believe that one can sneak away just before midnight in order to avoid it?’¹⁵⁹ In this regard, the decision to desert becomes the ‘Achse [...], um die sich das Rad [s]eines Seins dreht’ (KDF: 71), and ultimately the measure of the ‘private und subjektive Wahrheit’ of his existence (KDF: 71).

Such a decision, however, has to be taken and carried out in solitude. Andersch’s protagonist knows of the togetherness of decision and solitude. Thus he ponders:

Eine Nacht wird kommen, dachte ich, in der ich allein sein werde, ohne auf jemanden warten zu brauchen. Endgültig allein. Allein und frei. Außer Gesetz und Befehl. Aufgenommen von der Nacht und der Wildnis der Freiheit. Vorsichtig mich bewegend, durchs Gras, unter Bäumen und Felsen. Indianerspiel. Wolken über mir. Stimmen in der Ferne. (KDF: 60)

Only when he is alone is he able to decide on a course of action and to carry out his plan of escape. Only when in solitude, after his comrades leave him alone believing that he needs to repair his bicycle tire, is Andersch’s protagonist confronted with this challenge. He wonders whether he should have persuaded his fellow soldiers to flee with him, yet this process of self-questioning is resolved by an ever-stronger appeal to the importance of making his own decision. He would otherwise have been encouraging his comrade to making a choice that was not his own, but rather borrowed from someone else. No one but the individual him- or herself can make a

¹⁵⁸ Vaisfeld, ‘Andersch’, p. 7.

¹⁵⁹ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, p. 160.

decision regarding his or her existence. As the protagonist puts forth: ‘Man kann nur versuchen, ihnen die Möglichkeiten zu zeigen, aus denen sie wählen können’ (KDF: 71). It is nevertheless important to note the underlying sense of cowardice that quietly pervades this scene. The protagonist rationalises his thought process by emphasising the need for individuals to make individual choices, yet had he tried to convince his comrades in the form of ‘others’ they might have stopped him and apprehended him as a deserter. In this regard it appears somewhat remiss to impulsively glorify the protagonist’s actions, for what his attempt at freedom signifies is an implicit sense of egoism and self-interest in the face of the ‘other.’ To reiterate a point made earlier, his comrades remain an integral part in his freedom, yet Andersch’s narrator can only experience freedom in juxtaposition to the ‘other.’

Essentially, the freedom that the individual strives for is something to be achieved and not to be granted. It is also something that essentially belongs to the individual because the individual is essentially free. Freeing himself is, for Andersch’s protagonist, the act of laying claim to a fundamentally human entitlement. ‘Ich wollte ‘rüber’, he says, ‘weil ich mir damit aufs neue das Recht erwarb, Bedingungen stellen zu können, auf die ich mir schon in der Vergangenheit einen Anspruch erworben hatte’ (KDF: 81). In his voice, one can hear resonate also the voice of Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous Anti-Climacus whose explorations of the notion of ‘self’ in *The Sickness Unto Death* are legendary in their opacity. The self, according to Anti-Climacus, is freedom,¹⁶⁰ and what one is to understand by this is that each individual ‘is destined to become himself, and as such every self certainly is angular, but that only means that it is to be ground into shape’.¹⁶¹ What Anti-Climacus means by this is that the self is both discovered and constructed, and that the individual’s proper role is a sort of ethical editor, or an artist who works with the materials and their limitations to create a work, a self.¹⁶² In this same way, achieving freedom is of paramount importance for the protagonist of *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* because it constitutes, in this regard, the fullest actualisation of his potential to be.

¹⁶⁰ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, , p. 29.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁶² This is evocative of Judge Vilhelm’s words in *Either/Or*: it is the individual’s task to take his or her concretion as he or she finds it and ‘order, shape, temper, inflame, control – in short, to produce an evenness in the soul, a harmony, which is the fruit of personal virtues’, Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, p. 262.

Yet, as Andersch acknowledges, freedom is rare, it is a fragile and fleeting good: ‘In jenem winzigen Bruchteil einer Sekunde, welcher der Sekunde der Entscheidung vorausgeht,’ he writes, ‘verwirklicht sich die Möglichkeit der absoluten Freiheit, die der Mensch besitzt. [...] Frei sind wir nur in Augenblicken. In Augenblicken, die kostbar sind (KDF: 84). Although similarly located in Sartrean doctrine, Andersch’s emphasis on the momentary character of freedom and the preciousness of the instant also has Kierkegaardian overtones; these manifest themselves in particular in the concept of the ‘moment’ (øjeblik), which Kierkegaard discusses in his 1844 work *Philosophical Fragments* and similarly in the *Concept of Anxiety*, in which Kierkegaard has Vigilius Haufniensis explain how ‘the moment is not properly an atom of time but an atom of eternity’.¹⁶³ Freedom dwells in decision, or rather, freedom *is* decision, because the latter is taking possession of man’s potential to be absolutely free. In *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*, freedom can be seen to be a hasty gap between two extended periods of un-freedom: life as a German soldier and life as the American war prisoner that Andersch’s protagonist is destined to become. Even if freedom is but the no-man’s-land ‘zwischen der Gefangenschaft, aus der [er] kam, und derjenigen, in die [er] ging’ (KDF: 81), it remains a precious instant worth striving for: the redemption of the fundamental human entitlement is to become the free individual that one has the potential to be,¹⁶⁴ even if only for a given but crucial moment in one’s life.

As I relayed earlier in this study, the notion of anxiety or angst also commands a central place in the Danish philosopher’s existentialist thinking, which refers us to a generalised anticipation of the future. Of particular significance is the differentiation between the notions of ‘fear’ and ‘angst’, in the sense that fears have specific objects, whereas angst or anxiety can be defined as a natural emotion that stems from contemplating the eternal dilemmas of human existence. This distinction corresponds to the grammatically distinct notion that people *have* fears, as something one possesses, whereas they *are* anxious, indicating a condition of being.

¹⁶³ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, p. 88.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Gerhard Kay, ‘Die Kirschen Etruriens in der Faszination von Sartres Appell zur Entscheidung’, in *Zu Alfred Andersch*, ed. Volker Wehdeking (Stuttgart: Klett, 1983), pp. 13-21, p. 19.

This grammatical distinction is less evident in the German, however (*Angst haben*). In his 1952 work Andersch also reflects on the Kierkegaardian concept of angst. In his autobiographical novel the narrator outlines four collective components of human individuals: *Angst*, *Mut*, *Vernunft* and *Leidenschaft*. The protagonist explains: ‘Zwischen Angst und Mut treten die beiden anderen natürlichen Eigenschaften des Menschen, Vernunft und Leidenschaft. Sie führen die Entscheidung, die er zwischen Mut und Angst zu treffen hat, herbei’ (KDF: 84). The narrator comprehends the concept of ‘Leidenschaft’ as the antithesis of ‘Vernunft’, yet not necessarily ‘im “feindlichen” (KDF: 84) Sinn’, as Raabe observes, but rather ‘als notwendige Ergänzung’.¹⁶⁵ Kierkegaard similarly perceives human reason and abstract thinking to be extended through passion: ‘Give a person energy, passion, and he is everything’,¹⁶⁶ he writes. The human being is comprised of these four characteristics which are fundamentally indispensable; thus the protagonist of *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* reflects: ‘Denn wie kann bis zum Mord entschlossene Freiheit herrschen zwischen Eigenschaften, die so offensichtlich zur menschlichen Natur gehören, daß, wollte man auch nur eine von ihnen amputieren, die Seele sterben müsste?’ (KDF: 84-85).

Of these four characteristics, angst is attributed as having the greatest significance; the narrator relates: ‘Beschrieb den Menschen, weil ich meine Angst zu beschreiben habe. Unsere Angst’ (KDF: 88). In doing so the narrator, like Kierkegaard, differentiates between *Furcht*, i.e. fear, on the one hand, and *Angst* on the other. Andersch similarly applies the term as coined by Kierkegaard, which has since and through him been admitted into modern existentialist thinking: ‘Die Furcht und ihre höchste Steigerung, der Schrecken, kommen von außen auf den Menschen zu, während die Angst bereits von Anfang an in ihn eingeschlossen ist’ (KDF: 83-84). Looking retrospectively at this explanation, Raabe observes: ‘die Gefühlslage [war] während der zweiten Verhaftung des Erzählers von diesem selbst nicht zutreffend bezeichnet’.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, he speaks in this context predominantly about his acute feelings of angst:

¹⁶⁵ Raabe, *Das Wort*, p. 123.

¹⁶⁶ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, p. 267.

¹⁶⁷ Raabe, *Das Wort*, p. 124.

Als ich in den Stunden, die meiner zweiten Verhaftung folgten, auf der Holzpritsche in einer großen, überfüllten und stinkenden Zelle der Münchner Polizeidirektion lag, packte mich die Angst, die mich in der Haft-Zeit vorher, im Lager, niemals hatte antasten können. (KDF: 40)

Later he appears to correct himself, referring to his current situation as fear-ridden, as opposed to angst-ridden, evoking the Kierkegaardian differentiation: ‘Kopflose Furcht hat mich nur einmal in meinem Leben ergriffen, im Herbst 1933, in jener Zelle des Münchner Gestapo-Gefängnisses, als ich zum zweiten Mal verhaftet worden war’ (KDF: 83). As Raabe notes: ‘Aus dem Gedanken, dass die Angst dem Menschen wesentlich angehört, folgt, dass ihre Bestimmung nicht durch das gegeben werden kann, auf das sie sich richtet’.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, the essence of angst is not a definite course, but rather its all-encompassing nature. The protagonist gives utterance to it when depicting the anxiety he experienced when at the theatre: ‘Und noch heute denke ich, wenn ich im Theater sitze, in den Sekunden, ehe sich der Vorhang hebt, daran, dass ich eines Tages werde sterben müssen’ (KDF: 49). He similarly speaks of a ‘tiefe[s], angstvolle[s] Lebensgefühl’ (KDF: 49), a state of angst that centres on the perceived threat of everyday reality. The inexplicable nature of angst also finds expression at the beginning of the chapter entitled ‘Die Angst’. Following an exchange between the protagonist and Lieutenant Meske, the narrator describes a part of the surrounding landscape and proclaims: ‘Diese Gegend legte einem das Gefühl der Angst nahe’. A view of the sea stimulates similar feelings of dread. Previously in the novel the sea is depicted as a longed-for destination, a ‘Chiffre für Freiheit’¹⁶⁹ (see KDF: 32, 56, 62, 75). Yet at this juncture it is portrayed as threatening, lonely, ‘ein schieferfarbenes und tückisches Weltende-Meer’ (KDF: 79), and, by implication, a force of rivalry. The protagonist feels anxious at the sight of the landscape, and consumed by its enormity. Andersch personifies parts of the landscapes, which appear to be physically *covered* in angst; thus he speaks of ‘[die] von Weltangst erfassten Pinien’ (KDF: 79). Yet it is precisely the interconnection between the narrator’s experienced angst and the attainment of freedom that places us firmly back in Kierkegaardian territory.

¹⁶⁸ Raabe, *Das Wort*, p. 124.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

Kierkegaard asserts that angst is not a determinant of freedom, but rather is a dual sense of enticement and alarm produced in the consciousness of innocence by the ‘nothing’ or ‘indeterminateness’ both of the possible self and of the ‘being able’ (freedom’s possibility). Angst is essentially a troubled awareness of freedom and precedes the leap from one stage of life to the next. For the protagonist in *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*, angst is a crucial state which drives him towards courage at the decisive moment: ‘Niemals hätte ich den Mut zur Flucht aufgebracht, wenn ich nicht im gleichen Maß, in dem ich mutig war, feige gewesen wäre’ (KDF: 90), he admits. His feelings hence reveal ‘ein ähnliches komplementäres Verhältnis [...] wie bei Kierkegaard’; as Raabe notes: ‘Bei diesem schafft die Angst vor der Möglichkeit den Mut zur Wirklichkeit’.¹⁷⁰ In short, through the experience of angst the protagonist ultimately realises – in the double sense of the word – his right to choose, which in turn lends his future life meaning and significance.

* * *

What my discussion makes manifest is both the scope and eclecticism that underlie Alfred Andersch’s unique existentialist standpoint. Hans Magnus Enzensberger perceived in Andersch’s thinking ‘ein antizyklisches Denken,’ an essential oppositional attitude to the prevailing *Zeitgeist*,¹⁷¹ and the inferences drawn from this appraisal of Andersch’s work serve to further reinforce this study’s overarching premise regarding the inherent contradictions and inconsistencies arising from the multitude of theological, anthropological and literary positions that colour Andersch’s literary oeuvre. What an analysis of scholarship reveals is how researchers have tended to focus by and large on Andersch’s preoccupation with and adherence to Sartrean existentialism. Andersch’s protagonist’s act of desertion was ‘gefärbt [...] von Sartres existenziellem Akt’, as Wehdeking asserts;¹⁷² Ulrich Fries and Günter Peters have labelled Sartre as Andersch’s ‘existentialistischen

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁷¹ Andersch/Enzensberger Interview, ‘Die Literatur nach dem Tod der Literatur’, in *Über Alfred Andersch*, ed. Gerd Haffmans, Remy Charbon & Franz Cavigelli (Zurich: Diogenes, 1980), pp. 200-221, p. 201.

¹⁷² Volker Wehdeking, *Alfred Andersch* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1983), p. xi.

Ziehwater',¹⁷³ Gerhard Hay similarly upholds in his essay from 1994 that Andersch's anthropology was defined 'in großen Maße von Sartre',¹⁷⁴ and there is unquestionably a considerable degree of truth to these claims. As a key figure in the post-war *Junge Generation* movement, co-editor of *Der Ruf*, and as someone involved in the founding of the *Gruppe 47*, the intellectually curious Andersch embraced the Sartrean post-war notion of *littérature engagée*: to bolster the freedom of the reader whilst renouncing any attempt to influence his or her choices, to thematise the subversive nature of literature, and to underscore the overarching premise that art embodies freedom and stands in opposition to power. Literature was, for both Sartre and Andersch, a vehicle through which individuals could extricate themselves from falsity and suppression and strive towards change. Such notions are particularly discernable in his 1952 novel *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*, most palpably in his assertion that the only genuine freedom recognised is that experienced in the 'Augenblick' of a completely autonomous decision based on personally defined values. In keeping with Sartre's 'situation' theory, the constant dialectic of the alternating forces of environmental circumstances and free will dictates that freedom can never be more than a momentary experience.

Yet a contrastive examination of Andersch's writing uncovers both reservation in his reception of Sartre and, simultaneously, a profound engagement with Kierkegaardian as well as French and English Catholic revival theistic existentialist ideas. Indeed, what his 1952 novel also illustrates is Andersch's clear preoccupation with the theme of fate, or 'Schicksal'. 'Der unsichtbare Kurs' in *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* likewise serves to refocus, if not altogether rebuff, the Sartrean notion of a 'situation' in which the outcome is dependent entirely on individual choices which are in no way pre-determined. Andersch's notion of an inevitable causal chain of events sharply contradicts the fundamental Sartrean premise that 'There is no determinism, man is free, man is freedom, [...] man is condemned to be free'.¹⁷⁵ Whilst some scholars acknowledge the discrepancies in Andersch's application of Sartrean doctrine, most notably Koberstein, Raabe and Littler, they have failed to

¹⁷³ Ulrich Fries & Günter Peters, 'Zum Verhältnis von Kunsttheorie und ästhetischer Praxis bei Alfred Andersch', in *Alfred Andersch: Text und Kritik* 61/62 (Munich: Richard-Borberg, 1979), pp. 27-53, p. 32.

¹⁷⁴ Gerhard Kay, 'Die Kirschen Etruriens', p. 20.

¹⁷⁵ Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, p. 41.

explore in sufficient depth the potential for a Catholic revivalist reading of *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*. What lies at the heart of Mauriac's *Thérèse Desqueyroux* and Greene's *Power and The Glory*, as two cases in point, is not only a concern for the theme of existentialist flight into self-fulfilment, but also, and perhaps more significantly, the spiritualist notion of pre-destination. For Andersch similarly, fate appears to constitute the absolute determination of the individual, from which he can only momentarily free himself: 'Aber es ist unmöglich,' Andersch has his protagonist state, 'sich für länger als einen Tag aus dem Schicksal der Massen zu befreien' (KDF: 123).

Andersch's existentialist eclecticism is of course, as we noted, further reinforced by his concern for Kierkegaard's theistic existentialism. With the exception of Anne Raabe's publication from 1999, studies on Kierkegaard's influence on Andersch are, compared to the interest invested in the impact of Sartrean existentialism, negligible. Andersch is considerably indebted to the Danish father of existentialism, and my study has sought to remind us of the degree to which Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, *The Sickness Unto Death* and his *Repetition* constitute a no less crucial existentialist philosophical backdrop against which to read and interpret Andersch's literary oeuvre than Sartre's brand of existentialism. The self, according to Kierkegaard's *Anti-Climacus*, is freedom;¹⁷⁶ each individual 'is destined to become himself, and as such every self certainly is angular, but that only means that it is to be ground into shape'.¹⁷⁷ Kierkegaard explains that the self is both discovered and constructed, and that the individual's proper role as a sort of ethical editor, or as an artist who works with the materials of life and their limitations to create a work, a self.¹⁷⁸ In this way, achieving freedom is of paramount importance for the protagonist of *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* because it represents, in this regard, the fullest actualisation of his potential to be. The Kierkegaardian notion of angst similarly establishes a key thematic backdrop to the work. Angst essentially stands for a troubled awareness of freedom and precedes the leap from one stage of life to the next. For the protagonist

¹⁷⁶ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, p. 29.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁷⁸ This is evocative of Judge Vilhelm's words in *Either/Or*: it is the individual's task to take his or her concretion as he or she finds it and 'order, shape, temper, inflame, control – in short, to produce an evenness in the soul, a harmony, which is the fruit of personal virtues', Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, p. 262.

in *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*, angst constitutes a crucial state of mind which drives him towards courage at the decisive moment; he concedes: ‘Niemals hätte ich den Mut zur Flucht aufgebracht, wenn ich nicht im gleichen Maß, in dem ich mutig war, feige gewesen wäre’ (KDF: 90).

Our findings lead us to conclude that what can essentially be located in Andersch’s writing is an eclectic blend of philosophical positions from which a distinctive metaphysical standpoint amalgamating theistic and atheistic existentialist aspects has come into fruition. Andersch’s captivation with Sartrean existentialism is unarguable, as are his political engagement in the *résistance* and his fascination with Sartre’s literary theory, as articles in *Der Ruf*, *Europäische Avantgarde* and *Merkur* demonstrate. Also indisputable is his commitment to ‘engaged’ literature, an indebtedness to which his poem *andererseits* readily testifies. The characteristically Sartrean concepts of the flight into freedom, situational freedom in the form of ‘Augenblick,’ and bad faith similarly form a decisive existential backdrop against which to read his 1952 novel *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*. Studies by Ingeborg Drewitz, Wolfgang Rath, Rhys Williams, Anja Koberstein, Margaret Littler, Irène Heidelberger-Leonhard and Volker Wehdeking serve testament to the abundance of scholarly attention to the impact of Sartrean existentialism on Andersch’s literary production in the post-war years; yet their findings cover only one dimension of this author’s existentialist interests.

Using these studies as a springboard, the overarching intention of this chapter has been to provide a broadened philosophical reassessment of the genesis of Andersch’s unique brand of existentialism. Whilst Sartrean concepts such as freedom, decision and choice have been productively employed by Andersch in his literary works, they appear in a new context, often with a new purpose. His re-framing of the *Freiheitsbegriff* by way of his belief in ‘eine von Gott verliehene existentielle Freiheit’,¹⁷⁹ as a case in point, not only supports the above hypothesis, but it simultaneously alludes to an *Annäherung an Christentum* and, by inference, a counter-position to Sartrean atheism. This position is further explored in *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*, where the protagonist ruminates over God’s existence:

¹⁷⁹ Alfred Andersch, *Nihilismus oder Moralität*, p. 9.

Gäbe es ihn [Gott] nicht, so wäre an seiner Stelle das Nichts. [...] Es wäre ein genauso Großes, Heiliges wie Gott. Es wäre so ungeheuer und so ungeheuer verpflichtend wie Gott. Gott würde in das Nichts eintreten und es göttlich machen. Das Nichts wäre Gott! Schon heute sind, im Denken der Menschen, die das Nichts denken, Gott und das Nichts identisch. Alle Denker des Nichts sind religiöser Denker. (KDF: 113)

Drawing on Andersch's *Gottesverständnis*, this investigation has located in *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* a programmatic exploration of such themes as fate and causality, themes which form the very core of the French and English reformist Catholic works of François Mauriac, Emmanuel Mounier, Jacques Maritain and Graham Greene. Probing these religious influences further, this chapter has examined Kierkegaard's concept of angst as well as his notion of the aesthetic and the ethical stages of existence, all of which form an additional existentialist philosophical backdrop against which to interpret the characters populating Andersch's literary oeuvre. In particular Kierkegaard's consideration for the distinctive existential stages of human life as explained, for example, in *Either/Or*, serves as an edifying model for various characters in Andersch's prose.

This chapter shall conclude by reinforcing the scope and diversity of Andersch's existentialist influences, which can be seen to have relativised the overarching significance of Sartrean existentialism in *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*. Sartre was nevertheless of profound philosophical importance for Andersch personally, whose doctrine facilitated, if not prompted, the compiling of Andersch's memoirs, as well as his public defence and philosophical rationalisation of his desertion from the German Army in 1944. Anja Koberstein's concluding remarks have particular resonance in this regard:

Auch wenn Andersch die Sartresche Philosophie so sehr umdeutet, dass man ihn [Sartre] nicht mehr als Existentialisten bezeichnen kann, [...] sind Sartres Thesen dennoch von großer Bedeutung für Andersch, da sie ihm, wenn auch

häufig missverstanden bzw. umgedeutet, in der Nachkriegssituation neue Handlungsmöglichkeiten eröffnen.¹⁸⁰

It nevertheless remains evident that if any philosophical doctrine were to function as an existentialist interpretative foil for Andersch's 1952 novel, it would have to be, at least as much, the twentieth-century Catholic revivalism of Emmanuel Mounier, Jacques Maritain, François Mauriac and Graham Greene as well as the theistic existentialism of Søren Kierkegaard, rather than a purely Sartrean straightjacket.

¹⁸⁰ Koberstein, *Gott oder das Nichts*, p. 223.

*'Man has places in his heart that do not yet
exist, and into them enters suffering in order
that they may have existence'*

- Léon Bloy

(quoted by Graham Greene
in the frontispiece of *The
End of the Affair*, 1951)

Mit Heinrich Böll ist einer der Großen der deutschen Literatur von uns
gegangen. [...] Er war ein Anwalt der Schwachen und ein Feind der
Selbstgerechtigkeit. Er trat für die Freiheit des Geistes ein, wo immer sie in
Gefahr war. Er war unbequem und streitbar, er erregte Anstoß und erzeugte
Achtung. Seine mutige, engagierte Wache und immer wieder mahnende
Stimme wird uns fehlen. Sein Werk bleibt.¹

These words of condolence sent to Heinrich Böll's widow by Richard von
Weizsäcker, the sixth German *Bundespräsident*, upon her husband's passing on 16
July 1985, draw attention to an intriguing paradox with regards to Heinrich Böll's
literary legacy. The first president of the *Bundesrepublik Deutschlands* was
honouring one of the Republic's most critical adversaries. Over ten years previously,
at the height of the public hysteria over radical left-wing urban terrorism, Böll had
been branded a dissenter after vehemently criticising the problem of right-wing
demagogy in the Springer press and the crypto-fascism of the *Bild-Zeitung*.² He was
vilified as 'nicht einen Deut besser als die geistigen Schrittmacher der Nazis', and

¹ Cf. Franz Josef Görtz (ed.), *Heinrich Böll. Zu seinem Tode. Ausgewählte Nachrufe und das letzte Interview* (Bonn: Inter Nationes, 1985), p. 56.

² 'Will Ulrike Gnade oder freies Geleit?', *Spiegel*, 10 January 1972. According to Böll this was not a defense of Ulrike Meinhof or the Baader-Meinhof Group, but was an attempt to bring reason to an emotional political issue and suggest mercy and restraint as the basis for a solution to a national crisis; cf. Heinrich Böll, *Werke: Essayistische Schriften und Reden*, vol. 2: 1964-1972, ed. Bernd Balzer (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1978), p. 543ff.

‘gefährlicher als Baader-Meinhof’.³ His condemnations similarly provoked opprobrium in the political sphere, as is evident in the 1974 public address from then chairman of the parliamentary CDU/CSU and subsequent Federal President, Karl Carstens:

Ich fordere die ganze Bevölkerung auf, sich von der Terrortätigkeit zu distanzieren, insbesondere auch den Dichter Heinrich Böll, der noch vor wenigen Monaten unter dem Pseudonym Katharina Blüm [sic.] ein Buch geschrieben hat, das eine Rechtfertigung von Gewalt darstellt.⁴

Weizsäcker’s words of condolence, which were written in a private capacity, nevertheless point to a different appraisal of Heinrich Böll: that of a writer, committed intellectual, and so-called ‘conscience’ of the German nation.

The label *Gewissen der Nation* is commonly attributed to the 1917 Cologne born German writer and can be traced as far back as *Der Spiegel*’s title story from 6 December 1961, which deliberated the role of German writers confronted with the challenges of the recently erected Berlin Wall. It became particularly synonymous with Böll throughout the 1960s. Adorno echoed these sentiments in an essay from 1967 which he wrote to commemorate Böll’s fiftieth birthday: ‘So ist er wirklich zum geistigen Repräsentanten des Volkes geworden, in dessen Sprache er schreibt’.⁵ Böll’s fiction expresses, generally speaking, a preoccupation with human affairs in the broadest sense and on all levels, be it ministering to the most basic of human needs such as warmth, food, a place to rest one’s head, or through demonstrating man’s desire for love, friendship and comradeship. It is this unostentatious and

³ For a detailed anthology of the condemnations made in the wake of Böll’s persistence on nonviolent conduct and a fair trial for the *Rote Armee Faktion*, see Frank Grützbach (ed.), *Heinrich Böll: Freies Geleit für Ulrike Meinhof: Ein Artikel und seine Folgen* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1972), p. 104/p.147.

⁴ Cf. Klaus Schröter, *Böll mit Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1992), p. 119. See also Heinrich Böll, *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum oder Wie Gewalt entstehen und wohin sie führen kann* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1974); the novel recounts the tale of an innocent woman whose life is turned upside down by a ruthless police investigation and an intrusive tabloid reporter. The preface of the novel states: ‘Sollten sich bei der Schilderung gewisser journalistischer Praktiken Ähnlichkeiten mit den Praktiken der Bild-Zeitung ergeben haben, so sind diese Ähnlichkeiten weder beabsichtigt noch zufällig, sondern unvermeidlich.’

⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, ‘Keine Würdigung’, in *In Sachen Böll: Ansichten und Einsichten*, ed. by Marcel Reich-Ranicki (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1968), pp. 7-15, p. 7.

plainspoken quality of Böll's fiction that accounts for the critical recognition and acclaim that his works generated in the Federal Republic, not just within literary scholarship or politics, but also on a more popular level by appealing to everyday people.

Yet such laudatory designations were not always valued by Böll, who avowed:

Ich will nicht Deutschlands Heinrich sein, [...] Deutschland braucht keine Präzeptoren, deren hat es genug gehabt, es braucht kritische, aufmerksame Bürger, die nicht immer und unbedingt Autoren sein müssen [...]. Ich bin gegen Helden-Verehrung, Denkmäler, Images und Ikonen.⁶

For the 1972 Nobel laureate, an unwanted label of this nature was 'lebensgefährliche[r] Wahnsinn',⁷ for it implied a culpable avoidance of individual responsibility; if the term *Gewissen der Nation* were to have any validity, it could only properly be attached to the people's 'Parlament, ihr Gesetzbuch, ihre Gesetzgebung und ihre Rechtsprechung'.⁸ Of greater importance for Böll was the inherent responsibility involved in the task of writing, and the ethical imperative in one's perception of reality. When asked in 1949 'Worin besteht Ihrer Meinung nach heute die Aufgabe und die Bedeutung des künstlerischen Schaffens?', Böll replied:

Den Dingen ihren Namen zu geben. Die Wirklichkeit einzuordnen in eine Symbolik, die der Welt innewohnt. [...] Alle 'Zeiterscheinungen' transparent zu machen, so dass das Gültige sichtbar wird.⁹

For Böll, the duty of the author is to represent the reality of the individual, which cannot be located in statistical records of historical occurrences. To illustrate this point more lucidly: a historian may write about two battles and detail the fates of the defeated and triumphant, the writer of literature, however, must portray the

⁶ Cf. Heinrich Böll, *Heinrich Böll 1917-1985: Zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Bernd Balzer (Berlin: Lang, 1992), p. 300.

⁷ Interview Heinrich Böll und Hans-Peter Riese, 'Gespräch über Selbstverständlichkeiten', in *L '76* 6 (1977), pp. 5-37, p. 7.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *Literarische Revue* 4 (1949), no. 4, p. 245ff.

resounding significance and impact of these events on the common individual: ‘Die Wahrheit des Dichters ... ist, dass beide Schlachten [...] Gemetzel waren, dass für die Toten die Blumen nicht mehr blühen, kein Brot mehr für sie gebacken wird, der Wind nicht mehr für sie weht’.¹⁰

It is nevertheless evident when looking back over Böll’s literary career that a remarkable thematic and ideological consistency informs his work – themes such as humility, love, truth, charity, suffering, responsibility, faith are a common theme throughout – to the degree that a concise label such as ‘national conscience’ to frame Böll’s essential achievements may be justifiable, his nagging self-doubt notwithstanding. If *Gewissen der Nation* is too grandiose a term, he could perhaps be more accurately defined, as Michael Butler reasons, as a ‘conservative moralist’. Böll, according to Butler,

perceives and describes a society whose political, social and religious institutions are in drastic need of correction; he is conservative in that the values he seeks to defend and to inculcate are rooted in [...] the Gospel narratives of the New Testament and, in secular terms, in the humane tenets of the European Enlightenment.¹¹

Reflecting on the various labels that have become synonymous with Böll in recent decades, the main thrust of this study will be to consider the aptness and suitability of a new label, namely an existentialist label, against which to read and interpret Böll’s writing. Whilst it is not the intention of this dissertation to categorize Böll as a fully fledged existentialist, if such a task were even possible, what this chapter will seek to investigate are the various strands and strains of nineteenth- and twentieth-century existentialist thinking that have both informed and transformed the fundamental axioms of Böll’s aesthetic credo. In this study, select pieces from his literary oeuvre, beginning with *Der Engel schwieg* (1949/50) through to *Ansichten eines Clowns* (1963), will serve to document the German writer’s attempts throughout his literary

¹⁰ Heinrich Böll, ‘Die Stimme Wolfgang Borcherts’, in *Werke: Essayistische Schriften und Reden 1952-1963* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1979), pp. 161-165, p. 161.

¹¹ Michael Butler, ‘The Conservative Moralist’, in *The Narrative Fiction of Heinrich Böll*, ed. Michael Butler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 1-20, p. 2.

career to cultivate, refine and develop his thinking on existentialist matters, including responsibility, the self, the other, suffering, freedom, and angst.

SECONDARY LITERATURE

Approaching this task will be no simple feat. Heinrich Böll was not a man of narrow interests; his life's work addresses the political, social, moral and religious concerns of his epoch and he remained a dominant force in German intellectual public life until his death in 1985. As a result, the secondary literature on Böll is both thematically broad and vast in quantity.¹² Since the publication of Rainer Nägele's *Heinrich Böll: Einführung in das Werk und in die Forschung* in 1976,¹³ the number of studies dealing with the life and work of Böll has continued to rise. Although Nägele in 1976 judged this body of work to be 'immerhin noch übersehbar', his bibliography already comprised over two hundred entries. Later German and English language studies which serve testament to the sustained interest in Böll's literary legacy include Hans Joachim Bernhard's *Die Romane Heinrich Bölls* (1971)¹⁴, Jochen Vogt's *Heinrich Böll* (1978),¹⁵ Robert C. Conard's *Understanding Heinrich Böll* (1992),¹⁶ Bernhard Sowinski's *Heinrich Böll* (1993),¹⁷ Werner Bellmann's (ed.) *Das Werk Heinrich Bölls* (1995),¹⁸ Frank Finlay's *On the Rationality of Poetry: Heinrich Böll's Aesthetic Thinking* (1996),¹⁹ Bernd Balzer's *Das literarische Werk Heinrich Bölls* (1997),²⁰ Christine Hummel's *Intertextualität im Werk Heinrich Bölls* (2002),²¹ Melanie Helm's *Spes contra spem: Ansätze zu einem Kirchenbild der*

¹² The database in the Heinrich Böll Archives located in Cologne today records over 2,000 titles. These stem largely from German-speaking countries. It also lists Master and doctoral theses, thus further underscoring the ongoing interest in Heinrich Böll's fiction at academic institutions throughout the world.

¹³ Rainer Nägele, *Heinrich Böll: Einführung in das Werk und in die Forschung* (Frankfurt a/M: Athenäum, 1976).

¹⁴ Hans Joachim Bernhard, *Die Romane Heinrich Bölls: Gesellschaftskritik und Gemeinschaftsutopie* (Berlin: Rütten und Loening, 1971).

¹⁵ Jochen Vogt, *Heinrich Böll* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1978).

¹⁶ Robert C. Conard, *Understanding Heinrich Böll* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1992).

¹⁷ Bernhard Sowinski, *Heinrich Böll* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993).

¹⁸ Werner Bellmann, *Das Werk Heinrich Bölls. Bibliographie mit Studien zum Frühwerk* (Opladen: Westdeutscher, 1995).

¹⁹ Frank Finlay, *On the Rationality of Poetry: Heinrich Böll's Aesthetic Thinking* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996).

²⁰ Bernd Balzer, *Das literarische Werk Heinrich Bölls. Einführung und Kommentare* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1997).

²¹ Christine Hummel, *Intertextualität im Werk Heinrich Bölls* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2002)

Zukunft bei Heinrich Böll (2005),²² as well as Werner Jung and Jochen Schubert's (ed.) *'Ich sammle Augenblicke': Heinrich Böll 1917-1985* (2008).²³

The focal interests of these studies are unsurprisingly diverse; the latter publication includes a range of essays exploring themes such as *Humor und Wirklichkeit* in Böll's fiction (Jost Keller), Böll's travels in Ireland and his fascination with Irish literature (Gisela Holfter), as well as the *Gesellschaftskonzept* in Böll's early stories and novels (Walter Delabar). The volume edited by Bellmann similarly provide a comprehensive overview of some of the thematic and ideological components fundamental to Böll's thinking, the most valuable of which for our purpose is Beate Schnepf's study of the *literarische Strömungen* that shaped Böll's creative thinking, including Andersch, Sartre and Bloy.²⁴ Another key essay from this edited collection is Gabriele Sander's 'Die Last des Ungelesen' which, by reference to a number of first-hand sources including letters and interviews, details Böll's early literary and philosophical influences (Hölderlin, Kleist, Kierkegaard, Bloy, among others) and their prevalence in his literary productions.²⁵ Hans Joachim Bernhard's study is centred on his analyses of the early narratives *Wo warst Du, Adam?* and *Der Zug war pünktlich*. His focal concern is the 'Problem der Tradition' and the degree to which 'es Böll gelingt, an Traditionen einer realistischen, in der Tendenz plebejisch-demokratischen Literatur festzuhalten'. Bernhard also asserts the need for a 'genauere Bestimmung der ästhetischen Auffassungen des Autors', a need which is to some degree remedied by Frank Finlay's 1996 study, which provides a detailed exploration of the central concerns of Böll's aesthetic credo. These include the literary restoration of the *junge Generation*, retreat from literary realism, the social and moral duty of the writer (*engagement*), *Moral der Sprache* as well as his search for *Heimat*; Finlay also investigates the relationship between form and content in Böll's works. Christine Hummel's comprehensive and illuminating study of intertextuality in Böll's oeuvre surveys the explicit and implicit references to artistic

²² Melanie Helm, *Spes contra spem: Ansätze zu einem Kirchenbild der Zukunft bei Heinrich Böll* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005).

²³ Werner Jung and Jochen Schubert (eds.): *'Ich sammle Augenblicke' - Heinrich Böll 1917-1985* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2008).

²⁴ Beate Schnepf, 'Die Aufgabe des Schriftstellers: Bölls künstlerisches Selbstverständnis im Spiegel unbekannter Zeugnisse', in *Das Werk Heinrich Bölls: Bibliographie mit Studien zum Frühwerk*, ed. Werner Bellmann (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995), pp. 45-60.

²⁵ Gabriele Sander, 'Die Last des Ungelesen: Böll und die literarische Moderne', in *ibid.*, pp. 61-88.

works and their creators; Hummel's findings are presented predominantly through reference to autobiographical impartations, interviews, essays and speeches from Böll, and her tracing of intertextual references is plotted from Böll's early works through to his later creations.

What is of particular interest for the purpose of my own investigation is the degree to which Böll's literature and thinking has been discussed within a philosophical existentialist context. In short, aside from a few sporadic publications, this subject has received only cursory attention in the secondary literature. The earliest notable publication is Theodore Ziolkowski's 1962 essay 'Albert Camus and Heinrich Böll',²⁶ which seeks to uncover areas of thematic crossover between these ostensibly diverse writers. Ziolkowski explains how Böll and Camus are united in their existentialist concern for the individual, who is an exile in this world, and strives to accentuate the spirit of metaphysical revolt that constitutes a driving thematic force in a number of Böll's and Camus's fictional works, specifically *Billard um halbzehn* and *La Chute* and *La Peste*, respectively.

Surprisingly, the following decades saw little scholarly interest in Böll and existentialism, yet a handful of studies from the mid to late 1990s and early 2000s sought to reassess this issue. In his 2005 publication *Choices and Conflicts: Essays on Literature and Existentialism*,²⁷ Hans van Stralen dedicates an entire chapter to an 'ethical-literary existentialist' reading of Böll's *Der Engel schwieg*. The essay begins promisingly and outlines its intention to discuss Böll's 1949/50 novel against a backdrop of existentialist topoi, in particular the limit situation, the other and commitment. A lack of focussed methodological engagement, however, renders these discussions somewhat meandering and superficial. Van Stralen's treatment of the term 'authenticity' for instance is problematic, as it is presented with no concrete philosophical explanation or justification. Sweeping references are similarly made to Heidegger's 'das Man' without sufficiently thoughtful reasoning. The study similarly

²⁶ Theodore Ziolkowski, 'Albert Camus and Heinrich Böll', in *Modern Language Notes* 77.3 (May 1962), pp. 282-291.

²⁷ Hans van Stralen, 'An Unwelcome Book: About Heinrich Böll's *Der Engel schwieg*', in H. van Stralen, *Choices and Conflict: Essays on Literature and Existentialism* (Brussels: Lang, 2005), pp. 111-118.

fails to confront the positioning of either theistic or atheistic existentialist philosophy in Böll's work at large, a subject which this dissertation shall treat as both necessary and fundamental.

By contrast, Beate Schnepf's 'Die Aufgabe des Schriftstellers: Bölls künstlerisches Selbstverständnis im Spiegel unbekannter Zeugnisse' is arguably the most significant publication to discuss Böll's writings within a metaphysical framework. Crucially, though, Schnepf's predominant scholarly concern is not existentialism, but rather the development of Böll's *literarische Tätigkeit* and artistic ambitions. The essay offers a thorough examination of the multitude of aesthetic positions, styles and movements that informed Böll's creative output, including discussions of Hans Werner Richter's *Realismuskonzept*, theistic and atheistic existentialism, Catholicism as a literary basis (Bloy, Greene, Bernanos, Kierkegaard), wealth and poverty as integral themes, to name a representative selection. Included within Schnepf's illuminating deliberations are valuable references to first-hand sources, including excerpts from interviews and letter correspondences, in which themes such as existentialism or the artistic duty of the writer are explicitly discussed. This essay will serve as a principal point of reference in my own upcoming discussions.

An essay by Gerhard Sauder in Jung and Schubert's *'Ich sammle Augenblicke'* takes as its focal point the role of Léon Bloy as a 'stilistische[s] Vorbild' in the development of Böll's radical Catholicism.²⁸ Sauder seeks to reveal how Bloy's 'Mystik der Armut' constitutes a central thematic influence on Böll's oeuvre. But like van Stralen's chapter, this study too fails to broach the specifically existentialist backdrop against which to interpret the theme of suffering in the works of these two deeply Christian writers. Gabriele Sander's 1995 essay 'Die Last des Ungelesenen' is more developed in this regard in how it illuminates in chronological order the lineages of a multitude of Böll's ideological affinities, including such existentialist figures as Kierkegaard, Bloy, Hemingway, Greene, Sartre and Camus. Sander offers an exhaustive overview of the various changes and developments in Böll's aesthetic thinking, yet at no point does she expand these suppositions on a specifically

²⁸ Gerhard Sauder, 'Heinrich Bölls Léon-Bloy-Lektüre: Ursprünge eines radikalen Katholizismus', in *'Ich sammle Augenblicke' - Heinrich Böll 1917-1985*, ed. Werner Jung and Jochen Schubert (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2008), pp. 31-48.

interpretative textual level to engage with their concrete traces in or ramifications for Böll's novels; in essence, the study, for all its potential, does not progress beyond a first albeit helpful overview.

Whilst these studies evidently recognise the potential for an existentialist reading of Böll's fictional oeuvre, the results are often either too narrow in scope, or lacking a sufficiently rigorous methodological framework. As such, it is among the aims of this chapter to make amends for these deficits in the secondary literature. Indeed, what this study will seek to reveal are the variegated theistic and atheistic strands of existentialist thinking that colour Böll's theistic and philosophical vision and give rise to the sense of affinity with the existentialist outlook that many of Böll's works generate for his readers. Included in this vision are key aspects of Sartrean, Camusean, Kierkegaardian, and both French revivalist and personalist doctrine.

As a first step we need to contemplate the development of Böll's aesthetic credo. I will use his theoretical and essayistic writings to focus attention on Böll's literary philosophy, his views on 'engagement' and literary commitment, the task of the writer and, above all, the compatibility of Böll's theoretical standpoint with that of French *écrivain engagé*, Jean-Paul Sartre and his theoretical predecessor, the personalist Christian thinker Emmanuel Mounier.

We will then move on to explore the tangible links between Böll's early fictional works with the theistic existentialist doctrines of Søren Kierkegaardian Léon and Bloy. Kierkegaard, Bloy and Böll can all be seen to regard suffering as a path to individual and authentic self-affirmation. Suffering establishes the individual's vitality, combative spirit, morality, fears, ideas and acts, as well as that which the individual has neglected or failed to do in his or her life. In a metaphysical sense, a successful and meaningful human life is not, for these thinkers, characterised through having overcome suffering; 'vielmehr geht es einem gelungenen Leben darum,' as Alexander Pschera explains in his study of Bloy's work, 'im Schmerz zu bestehen'.²⁹ It is through pain that the individual is able to fully individualise his or her worldly mission and purpose. Precisely these themes will be taken up and explored in Böll's

²⁹ Alexander Pschera, *Léon Bloy: Pilger des Absoluten* (Schnellroda: Edition Antaios, 2006), p. 100.

novels *Der Engel schwieg* and *Und sagte kein einziges Wort* as well as in a selection of his short stories.

In Böll's later publications, specifically his writing from the 1960s, the influence of Albert Camus becomes more prevalent in his literary oeuvre. This will constitute the third focus of my study. In *Ansichten eines Clowns*, the incongruity and irrationality of human existence, apathetic protagonists, and the flight into an objective order of ready-made, institutionalised values can be seen to constitute dominant metaphysical themes. Coloured with Christian values and iconography as they are, Böll's narratives, his earlier works in particular, do not immediately lend themselves to a comparison with the atheistic existentialist doctrine that was current in post-war France; what a closer reading of *Ansichten eines Clowns* reveals, however, is a gradual moving towards the existentialist ideology of French-Algerian thinker Albert Camus.

BÖLL AND EXISTENTIALISM

What do we know of Böll's engagement with existentialists and existentialist thought? In a letter to Axel Kaun written in Mai 1948 Böll seeks to outline his theoretical standpoint; in doing so, he references the literary and philosophical *Strömungen* of the era to which he can be seen to articulate a certain, albeit at that time imprecise affinity. He admits: 'Ich weiß nicht genau, was die sogenannten Existentialisten [!] wollen, aber ich habe die dunkle Ahnung, dass ich etwas Ähnliches möchte'.³⁰ The uncertainty and vagueness of Böll's position is compacted into his sensing a 'dunkle Ahnung'; clearly, the German writer felt a particular sensitivity to the existentialist agenda and was aware of thematic commonalities that interlinked with his own developing aesthetic ideology, yet at this juncture in time Böll was not able to substantiate or put this 'dark intuition' into more concrete terms. Other letters that follow in this period reveal how the term 'Existentialismus' remained prevalent in Böll's correspondence, yet continued to be nebulous in its application. Thus in July 1948 Böll wrote to Moritz Hauptmann, editor of the post-

³⁰ Letter from Boll to Axel Kaun, May 1948, cited in Beate Schnepf, 'Die Aufgabe des Schriftstellers', p. 50.

war literary magazine *Karussell*, that he ‘ohne je etwas “Existentialistisches” gelesen zu haben – auf dieser ebenso dunklen wie reizvollen Linie angelangt [ist]’.³¹

Of course, Böll was not alone among his contemporaries; he was engaging with and responding to ‘ein geradezu zeittypisches Phänomen’³² that found widespread resonance in a time of political upheaval and cultural disorientation. According to Beate Schnepf, existentialism offered ‘ein theoretisches Erklärungsangebot für das die Zeit prägende Lebensgefühl’.³³ Some years later, in a 1953 interview with Paul Schallück, Böll was able to more coherently outline his ideas about existentialism, in which he appeared to merge that movement’s philosophical deliberations with his own ‘literarisches Programm’; he now writes:

Ich möchte mir und meinen Lesern Klarheit verschaffen über die Grundthemen der menschlichen Existenz. Denn ich glaube, dass die Mehrzahl der Menschen heute von sich aus nicht die Bedingungen des Lebens durchschaut. Viele Menschen leben im Unwichtigen, denken, reden, tun Unwichtiges, leben an ihrem Wesen vorbei. Ich möchte sie davon ablenken, [...] und aufmerksam machen auf das Wesentliche. Für mich ist das Wesentliche in diesem wie in anderen Fällen das Existenzielle [!], das Gesetzte, allen Menschen Vorgegebene, das Urphänomen des menschlichen Lebens.³⁴

Yet whilst these remarks might suggest Böll’s embracing existentialist philosophy, the rest of the interview is dedicated to his defining his position in contrast to that of existentialism, the atheistic existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre in particular; he asserts:

Sartre sieht nur den Menschen, ausgesetzt ins Nichts, in dem er sich selbst begründen und bewähren soll. Ich sehe und erlebe den Menschen und auch

³¹ Letter from Böll to Moritz Hauptmann, July 1948, cited in Beate Schnepf, ‘Die Aufgabe des Schriftstellers’, p. 50.

³² Schnepf, ‘Die Aufgabe des Schriftstellers’, p. 50.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Paul Schallück, ‘Interview mit Heinrich Böll’, in *Literair Paspoort* 69 (1953), Amsterdam, p. 187.

seine Existenz in Ableitung von und in der Hinwendung zu Gott, der für mich nur der christliche Gott ist.³⁵

Already in 1948 Böll explained in another letter to Axel Kaun what he perceived to be the inextricable unity of his literary agenda and his fundamentally religious worldview: 'Ich kann nicht lassen, daran zu glauben,' he explains, 'dass es einen "christlichen Existentialismus" geben muss, der entgegen aller Romantik und aller substanzlos gewordenen Tradition für uns Junge die religiöse Bindung wirklich wieder zu einem Erlebnis machen kann'.³⁶ Significant here of course is the widespread disinterest in and rejection of Böll's literary output in the post-war years that both economically and emotionally beleaguered the German writer. A few weeks before writing the above letter, a newspaper had rejected his text *Das Vermächtnis*: 'die Brüder wollen nichts so scharf Antimilitaristisches', he complains; 'drei Jahre nach dem Krieg muss man sich schon wieder vor dem Publikum fürchten'.³⁷ It was predominantly Böll's 'christlicher Inhalt'³⁸ that proved to be particularly detrimental, and his subsequent inability to find his 'literarische Heimat' was a distressing experience for the writer. Böll's 'künstlerische Heimatlosigkeit' was further reinforced by the repeated rejections from newspapers and editorial offices in the late 1940s. As Böll bemoans in a letter to the editor of the *Kölnische Rundschau*, Wilhelm Mogge, even the Catholic press were reluctant to accept his work. It seemed impossible, wrote Böll,

für einen jungen Schriftsteller, der weder auf der devotionalistischen noch auf der sentimental Ebene sich bewegt, andererseits natürlich keinen 'Namen' hat, so dass er aus konventionellen Gründen hin und wieder gedruckt werden muss; unmöglich also scheint es, eine Chance zu bekommen, die sich unter dem Motto 'Christentum und Demokratie' verantworten ließe.

In the process of developing his *künstlerisches Selbstverständnis* Böll remained steadfast in the belief, as Beate Schnepf elucidates in her essay, that 'der "richtige

³⁵ Kaun, cf. Schnepf, *ibid.*

³⁶ Letter from Heinrich Böll to Axel Kaun, 23 März 1948.

³⁷ Herbert Hoven (ed.), *Die Hoffnung ist ein wildes Tier: Der Briefwechsel zwischen Heinrich Böll und Ernst-Adolf Kunz 1945-1953* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1994), p. 18.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Weg”, [...] bestand in der Verbindung seiner religiös-weltanschaulichen Überzeugung mit der literarischen Art, einer Synthese von Christentum und Schriftstellerei’.³⁹ As Schnepf rightly observes, Christian faith was and would remain a fundamental and immovable facet of Böll’s artistic production. Böll was nevertheless aware of the difficulty in juggling Catholic belief and literary possibilities, and he explains this imminent disparity in his 1959 essay ‘Kunst und Religion’:

[...] er [der Christ] hat ein Gewissen als Christ und eins als Künstler, und diese beiden Gewissen sind nicht immer in Übereinstimmung. [...] So bleibt das Dilemma, Christ zu sein und zugleich Künstler und doch nicht christlicher Künstler.⁴⁰

This quandary also informs a letter sent by Böll to Father Alois Serwe in 1952, in which he writes: ‘ein Katholik und zugleich ein Schriftsteller zu sein. [...] Worüber soll ein Katholik, der Schriftsteller ist, schreiben? Warum soll er nicht ein zentral religiöses Thema, wie es die Beichte ist, schriftstellerisch zu gestalten versuchen [...]?’⁴¹

It is thus reasonable to assert that, in addition to responsibility, ‘das Wesentliche’ and the human condition, faith and religious creed constitute equally important thematic underpinnings to Böll’s aesthetic programme. Indeed, it is at this juncture in time in his budding career that certain strains of the theistic branches of the *arbre existentialiste*, specifically those of Søren Kierkegaard and Léon Bloy, become discernable in Böll’s thinking.

Böll had accorded a particular status to the Danish existentialist thinker ever since he first became acquainted with Kierkegaard’s philosophical doctrine prior to the

³⁹ Schnepf, ‘Die Aufgabe des Schriftstellers’, p. 52.

⁴⁰ Heinrich Böll, ‘Kunst und Religion’, in *Heinrich Böll: Zur Verteidigung der Waschküchen: Schriften und Reden: 1952-1959* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1985), pp. 314-318, p. 318.

⁴¹ Schnepf, ‘Die Aufgabe des Schriftstellers’, p. 53; In this letter Böll is responding to a cleric who publically vocalised his indignation at Böll’s ‘Beichtgeschichte’, *Das Abenteuer*, in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* from 13 September 1952.

outbreak of the war; talking in an interview in 1977, Böll described this somewhat haphazard encounter as follows:

Ein Freund meines Bruders war ein Maler, und der hatte mir mal so ein kleines Bändchen Kierkegaard geschenkt, da war ich siebzehn, so 1934, und ich dachte, mein Gott, das ist ja wahr, nicht? So wie man als Junge ein Buch liest, und hab mir dann später diese Tagebücher besorgt, die hatt [sic.] ich immer bei mir.⁴²

In a letter written to his future wife Annemarie Cech in July 1941, Böll again expresses his admiration for Kierkegaard's writing:

Ach, ich habe jetzt noch ein schönes Buch von Alois zum Namenstag bekommen: die Tagebücher Kierkegaards; er ist einer der Männer, die ich am meisten verehere, von allen modernen Christen wie Bloy und Dostojewski und Chesterton.⁴³

Kierkegaardian philosophy was evidently of great importance for the young Böll. A letter to Wolfgang Stemmler from 1966 reveals how Böll carried 'die Tagebücher und einige kleine Schriften' around in his rucksack; he continues: 'Ich habe schon als siebzehn-achtzehnjähriger Schüler Kierkegaard gelesen, erst in einer billigen, also für einen Schüler erschwinglichen Anthologie, dann später die Tagebücher in der Haeckerschen Übersetzung'.⁴⁴ Kierkegaard's reflections on Christianity and the church, guilt and original sin, angst and despair, as well as poetry and duty resonated strongly with the adolescent and young adult in the 1930s and early 1940s. Indeed, Kierkegaardian themes and motifs found what Gabriele Sander describes as 'ein starkes Echo',⁴⁵ which would later resound in the German writer's own literary creations. Evidence of this fascination can be located in his 1948 story *Das*

⁴² 'Ich habe nichts über den Krieg aufgeschrieben': Ein Interview mit Heinrich Böll und Hermann Lenz, in *Literaturmagazin 7: Nachkriegsliteratur*, ed. Nicolas Born and Jürgen Manthey (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1977), pp. 30-74, p. 42.

⁴³ Heinrich Böll an Annemarie Cech, 30. July 1941, in Jochen Schubert (ed.), *Heinrich Böll: Briefe aus dem Krieg: 1939-1945*, vol. 1 (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2001), p. 231.

⁴⁴ Heinrich Böll an Wolfgang Stemmler, 29. October 1966, cf. Stemmler, *Max Frisch, Heinrich Böll und Sören Kierkegaard*, PhD Dissertation, Munich 1972, p. 112.

⁴⁵ Sander, 'Die Last des Ungelesen', p. 72.

Vermächtnis (first published in September 1982 owing to its rejection in the 1940s),⁴⁶ in which Böll explicitly mentions Kierkegaard's diaries. This captivation is also evident in Böll's 1963 *Ansichten seines Clowns*, in which the protagonist Hans Schnier claims to have read Kierkegaard: 'Ich habe später sogar Kierkegaard gelesen (eine nützliche Lektüre für einen werdenden Clown), es war schwer, aber nicht anstrengend' [AC: 8], he tells us.

This citation is taken from the opening pages of Böll's novel, in which Hans Schnier, in his disjointed deliberations on his depressed state, his failed relationship with Marie and his reading Kierkegaard, berates the hypocrisy and tedium of institutionalised Christianity, and chastises the political orientation of the Church:

Nicht nur anstrengend, sondern auf eine überflüssige und unnatürliche Weise anstrengend. Zuerst beteten sie miteinander, und ich wusste die ganze Zeit über nicht, wohin mit meinen Händen und meinem Gesicht; ich denke, in eine solche Situation sollte man einen Ungläubigen nicht bringen. [...] Es wurde einer der peinlichsten Abende meines Lebens. Ich kann einfach nicht glauben, dass religiöse Gespräche so anstrengend sein müssen. Ich weiß: an diese Religion zu glauben ist schwer. [AC: 7-8]

One way to approach *Ansichten eines Clowns* is to see its basic theme as the conflict between abstract rules and concrete behaviour, principle (Christendom) and practise (Christianity), between the force of order and the desire for freedom. Seen from this vantage point, one can discern Böll's own tempered resentment regarding the failings of the Catholic Church in twentieth-century Germany. These sentiments are elsewhere evinced in his 1958 essay 'Brief an einen jungen Katholiken', in which Böll bemoans: 'es gibt ja keine religiösen Auseinandersetzungen mehr, nur noch politische, wie die des Gewissens, werden zu politischen gestempelt: Magere Jahre stehen bevor, [...] Wir werden gezwungen, von Politik zu leben'.⁴⁷ In the 1960s Böll also criticised the so-called 'progressive' Catholic movement, which, in his view, had abandoned its spiritual purpose. One consequence was that Böll left the Church

⁴⁶ Heinrich Böll, *Das Vermächtnis: Erzählung* (Bornheim-Merten: Lamuv, 1982).

⁴⁷ Heinrich Böll, *Brief an einen jungen Katholiken* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1961), p. 41.

in the 1970s after refusing to pay his *Kirchensteuer*. He died a Catholic yet never reclaimed official membership within the institution.⁴⁸

One hundred years earlier, Kierkegaard had, during his lifetime, also vocalised a similar dissatisfaction with the Lutheran Church in Denmark. His final philosophical output before his death can be seen as one of the most vilifying attacks on the institutionalised Church ever published. These confrontations were made in a series of articles published between 1854 and 1859,⁴⁹ which have been compiled in the book *Attack upon 'Christendom'*.⁵⁰ Kierkegaard and Böll are united in their concerns regarding the discrepancy between 'true' Christianity and the pseudo-Christianity practised by the 'modern' institutionalised Church. Furthermore, both Kierkegaard and Böll observe a radical dilution of Christian values in their respective epochs and a fundamental distortion of the understanding and practise of ministry. For Kierkegaard, Church ministers prioritised a comfortable living over the preaching of the Gospel, and they were thus 'making a fool out of God' by proclaiming something so far removed from the New Testament.⁵¹ He goes on to incite his reader to visit any Church on Sunday and make this assessment for him- or herself. 'Christendom', he remarks, 'is not the Church of Christ [...] Not by any means. No, I say that "Christendom" is twaddle which has clung to Christianity like a cobweb to a fruit.'⁵²

Kierkegaard's 1850 publication *Practice in Christianity (Indøvelse i Christendom)* is also a veritable diatribe against the 'calamity' that has occurred in contemporary religious practise.⁵³ Through the pseudonym Anti-Climacus, Kierkegaard laments how Christendom 'has abolished Christianity without really knowing it itself'.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Böll was also deeply troubled by the Papal Concordat of July 1933 between the Vatican and the Nazi Party, signed by Pope Pius XII. Here again Böll observes a fundamental clash between rules and behaviour, principle and practice, spirituality and institution; cf. Carl Amery, *Die Kapitulation oder Deutscher Katholizismus heute*, Nachwort von Heinrich Böll (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1963)

⁴⁹ The trigger for Kierkegaard's attack was the funeral following the death of Danish theologian, Jakob Mynster. Kierkegaard considered the funeral, led by Professor Haus Martensen, to be little more than a cynical exercise that sought only to draw attention to the orator, namely Martensen himself, who was seeking the bishopric that had become vacant by Mynster's death.

⁵⁰ Cf. Søren Kierkegaard, *Attack Upon 'Christendom': 1854-1855*, trans. and introduction by Walter Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1944).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 192.

⁵³ Søren Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity*, trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 35.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

Furthermore, to call oneself Christian has become ‘a nothing, a silly game’,⁵⁵ a mere matter of course. Six months before his death in 1855, Kierkegaard published the article ‘This Must be Said; So let it be Said’ (‘Dette skal siges; saa være det da sagt’) in an issue of *Fatherland*; in it he scalds:

Yes, this is the way it is, the official divine worship (professing to be the Christianity of the New Testament) is, Christianly speaking, a forgery, a falsification. But you, you ordinary Christian, you are entirely bona fide credulous in the conviction that everything is quite in order, is Christianity of the New Testament. This falsification is so entrenched that there may be even pastors who entirely bona fide go on living in the delusion that everything is quite in order, is the Christianity of the New Testament.⁵⁶

Yet Kierkegaard is not the only theistic existentialist ‘geistige Verwandtschaft’⁵⁷ to stand behind Böll’s writings. Indeed, Böll’s condemnation of the institutionalised Catholic Church evident in both his essayistic and fictional works reveals parallels with another theistic existentialist thinker, namely Léon Bloy. The life of this zealous polemicist and apologist is crowded with contradictions and extremes. In his commitment to poverty, Bloy refused to work and demanded the financial support of his friends and family. He and his wife Jeanne, along with their two children, lived in abject poverty in Montmartre. Their two sons, André and Pierre, died of starvation in 1885. The family’s experience of suffering was authentic, continuous and concrete beyond what most people can imagine.⁵⁸

Bloy’s radical Christian *Lebensphilosophie* led him to the steadfast conviction that poverty is ‘die einzige wahre, dem Christen gemäße Existenzform’.⁵⁹ Bloy also viewed society, with its aspirations for wealth and abundance, as fundamentally unchristian and demonised. The French thinker’s disparagement was directed towards those responsible for exercising determining influence on the acquisitive

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 67.

⁵⁶ Søren Kierkegaard, ‘This Must Be Said; So Let It Be Said’, in *The Moment and Late Writings*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 74.

⁵⁷ Stemmler, *Frisch, Böll, Kierkegaard*, p. 171.

⁵⁸ For more bibliographical information on Bloy, cf. Pschera, *Léon Bloy*, p. 37ff.

⁵⁹ Schnepf, ‘Die Aufgabe des Schriftstellers’, p. 55.

development of society, including the wealthy, as well as the Catholic Church, both of whom, in Bloy's opinion, dismissed the distress and suffering of the poor and needy. In the interview 'Eine deutsche Erinnerung', Böll can be seen to voice similar concerns; he observes:

Die Entwicklung der abendländischen Kultur ist geprägt von zwei Hierarchien, die uns beherrschen, dem Staat und der Kirche, die immer sehr gut miteinander arbeiten, auch wenn sie sich gelegentlich bekämpfen, weil natürlich die Unterordnung und Unterwerfung unter die oder jene Hierarchie der jeweils anderen dient. [...] Die Kirchen dienen immer noch als Domestizierungs-Institutionen, das kann ein Staat immer gut gebrauchen.⁶⁰

Direct references to Bloy in his essayistic writing evince Böll's early literary encounter with the French revivalist thinker; in his 1981 autobiographical reflection *Was soll aus dem Jungen bloß werden?*, Böll thus writes: 'und so schlug denn kurz vor dem Ende des Jahres 1936 Léon Bloy's *Blut der Armen* wie eine Bombe ein, weit entfernt von der Bombe Dostojewski und doch in ihrer Wirkung dieser gleich'.⁶¹ In earlier fictional texts Böll can be seen to assertively embrace and objectify Bloyian maxims, in particular *le sang du pauvre c'est l'argent*. In an unpublished draft from August 1948 with the heading 'Besuch bei Sperling', Böll develops the poverty / blood / money theme by introducing a first-person narrator whose only means of income is selling his own blood. 'Blut', he says, 'sind sie so weit, dass sie schon Blut von den Armen kaufen'. This literal re-rendering of the Bloyian dictum also surfaces in his 1949/50 novel *Der Engel schwieg*, in which Regina Unger donates blood in exchange for money that is imperative for her existence.

Ostensibly one might conclude that such novels and short stories are merely an attempt to objectify and re-articulate the themes of piety, responsibility, condemnation of institutionalised religion, sin and poverty which form the core of a

⁶⁰ Heinrich Böll, 'Eine deutsche Erinnerung: Interview mit René Wintzen: Oktober 1976', in *Heinrich Böll: Werke: Interviews I: 1961-1978*, ed. Bernd Balzer (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1977), pp. 504-665, p. 551.

⁶¹ Heinrich Böll, *Was soll aus dem Jungen bloß werden? Oder: Irgendwas mit Büchern* (Bornheim-Merten: Lamuv, 1981), p. 71.

considerable proportion of nineteenth- and twentieth-century century theistic literature. Yet Böll's engagement should not be read as superficial or merely second-hand. What is of particular interest here is the existentialist backdrop against which to read and interpret this chain of influences, for what underpins each of these writer's works is a profound probing of the themes of suffering as a metaphysical concern, individual self-determination, as well as authenticity, freedom of choice and existential angst. The following section seeks to juxtapose Kierkegaard's and Bloy's theistic existentialist treatment of suffering on the one hand and two of Böll's early novels on the other, *Der Engel schwieg* (1949/50) and *Und sagte kein einziges Wort* (1953).

THE METAPHYSICS OF SUFFERING

One of the greatest merits of the existentialist attitude lies in the fact that existentialist thinkers, broadly speaking, do not attempt to brush aside or neglect the stark truth that permeates man and society, namely that mankind's existence is suffused with pain and suffering. They believe we would be remiss to veil these matters or gloss over them as merely fatalistic or providentialistic. Existentialism involves an attempt to probe into even the most subjective and minor recesses of the human personality for the purpose of philosophical reflection. As such, it is only natural that existentialist thinkers should recognise the reality and significance of suffering. Existentialism is thus exceptional within the philosophical realm in that it approaches the problem of suffering not objectively, but rather *subjectively*, i.e. as something that has its grounding in the subjective existence of the individual. Existentialism can be seen philosophically to break away from the shackles of an objectively systematic world of facts and phenomena and seeks instead to enter into the immediacy of personal experience, and especially the individual's experience of pain and anguish. In doing so, existentialism claims that we have for too long been living an *inauthentic* life, a life which has been bureaucratically governed and standardised, and the consequence of which is that Man has come to forget his deeper authentic self in our in many ways superficial and fabricated reality. It is due to such fabrication that our understanding also of suffering has become distorted. Man seeks to understand suffering in the way it has been handed down to him by his

forefathers in terms of social custom rather than *authentically* in terms of genuine self-reflection, self-exploration and self-judgement.

Søren Kierkegaard and Léon Bloy are among those who respond to this vacancy in philosophy and theology by placing the themes of suffering and authenticity at the centre of their metaphysical concerns. To some extent this can be explained by their shared theistic perspective. Man has a Creator who gave him liberty within His order, and within His order alone; the individual suffers because God, in his moment of human liberty, chose to suffer on the Cross. For both thinkers, suffering – the suffering of Christ no less than the suffering of each individual – constitutes an inexorable facet of human existence and must be accepted and endured when it presents itself; it should not be turned away from. Within the vast labyrinth of Kierkegaard's musings on suffering as an existential experience we are reminded how Man, endowed with freedom by his Creator, has made a choice, effectively a choice to misuse his freedom. Adam committed the original sin as an act of free will, and his 'leap' from innocence into sinfulness was to encumber all of humankind. As descendants of Adam, sin – so goes the Christian perspective – weighs down on the entire human race. As such, Kierkegaard proposes, suffering, conditioned by mankind's innate sinfulness, becomes an essential and inevitable experience that cannot be removed or eliminated; it deepens human woe. In this regard guilt, as the basis of suffering, becomes 'the decisive expression of the existential pathos'.⁶² Whilst some strands of philosophical doctrine treat suffering as an obstacle to religious belief, or even as an argument against the existence of a benign all-powerful God, suffering for Kierkegaard poses a different problem, namely how an individual should relate to God in the face of suffering. In order to love God, one must accept suffering and sacrifice one's expectation of happiness for the sake of a higher spiritual life. As Kierkegaard outlines in *Repetition (Gjentagelsen)*, the Biblical myth of long-suffering Job is the paradigm of such love.⁶³ Job earns his

⁶² Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to 'Philosophical Fragments'*, vol. 1, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) p. 526.

⁶³ The *Book of Job* concerns itself with both divine justice and the exercise of patience in the face of *suffering*. Job is innocent, virtuous and God fearing. Satan accuses Job of self-interested piety, namely, Job is godly not because he loves God, but because he loves with gifts of God (family, good health, prosperity). Take that away, and Job would turn against God. God grants Satan the right to afflict Job's environment, but not him personally. The consequences are disastrous and come in four waves (Job 1:13-19). Job withstands these tests of piety and sits in silence for seven days. For an illuminating commentary on Job and Kierkegaard see: Andrew Burgess, 'Repetition: A Story of

tragic status for his refusal to suffer in silence. To rest in his own suffering would be an avoidance of suffering. He must learn to suffer more. Job, the exemplary sufferer, has experienced it all; loss after loss, pain after pain is imposed upon him. Job, Kierkegaard writes, is ‘the voice of suffering, the cry of the grief-stricken, the shriek of the terrified,’ and thus he is ‘a relief to all who bore their torment in silence, a faithful witness to all the affliction and laceration there can be in a heart, an unfailing spokesman who dared to lament in bitterness of soul and to strive with God’.⁶⁴ He is everyman who grieves for all human misery. As Stephen Mitchell writes, ‘he suffers not only his personal pain but the pain of all the poor and the despised’.⁶⁵

Yet in endowing Man with freedom of choice and self-determination (and therewith of choice of his attitude towards suffering), God endowed him with the most sacred of gifts: ‘The entire question of the relation of the divine goodness and omnipotence to evil can be solved quite simply, if you will’, Kierkegaard writes; ‘the highest thing that can in general be done for any being is to make him free.’ And once that being is free, i.e. free to live as he pleases, no claims against his Creator can be allowed. For with correct choice, suffering itself becomes the source also of good and bliss. It becomes a route towards authenticity, meaning and significance. From this kind of theistic existentialist perspective, it is a life-affirming gift, a leap towards truth and liberating in the profoundest philosophical sense; Kierkegaard continues:

Yes, if my suffering, my weakness were not the basis for my intellectual activity, I would of course make another attempt to deal with it quite simply as a medical matter. After all, if one’s life is absolutely without significance anyway, it just isn’t right to suffer as I suffer and simply do nothing. But here is the secret: The significance of my life corresponds exactly to my suffering.⁶⁶

Suffering’, in *International Kierkegaard Commentary*, vol. 6, ‘*Fear and Trembling*’ and ‘*Repetition*’, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1993), pp. 247-62.

⁶⁴ Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, p. 197.

⁶⁵ *The Book of Job*, trans. and intro by Steven Mitchell (San Francisco: North Point, 1987), p. xvi

⁶⁶ Søren Kierkegaard's *Journals and Papers*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. 233.

In his delineation of suffering in *The Gospel of Suffering* (1847) Kierkegaard envisions human existence as a sort of ‘school of suffering’; in teaching man to obey God and by following his command Kierkegaard prepares the individual for eternal life: ‘If then the school of suffering lasts a whole lifetime,’ writes Kierkegaard, ‘it is the very evidence that this school must be fitting us for what is highest. [...] The school for life shows its results in time, but the lifelong school of suffering fits us for eternity’.⁶⁷ Lars van der Grinten insists that Kierkegaardian suffering (*Lidelse*) ‘führt den Menschen aus der Verbundenheit mit der Welt, aus der Verfallenheit an die Zeit, aus der Vergänglichkeit heraus und richtet ihn auf Gott und die Ewigkeit’.⁶⁸ Expanding upon this notion, Almut Furchert asserts: ‘Im Leiden kommt dem Menschen seine Wirklichkeit schmerzhaft zu Bewusstsein, es lässt nicht zu, dass er sich in ein ideales Dasein flüchtet. Das Leiden selbst zwingt und hält ihn in der Wirklichkeit. Sich selbst in Wirklichkeit zu verstehen, bedeutet ja gerade, sich im Spannungsverhältnis von Idealität und Wirklichkeit zu verstehen’.⁶⁹

That suffering symbolises a decisive expression of the theistic existential struggle for individual freedom and authenticity to fully actualise itself is one shared by fellow Christian thinker, Léon Bloy, whose works translate Kierkegaard’s thinking into literary form. As Gabriele Kieser affirms in her study of Bloy’s work: ‘Es gibt kein Leben mit Gott ohne den Schmerz’.⁷⁰ Indeed, Bloy understood suffering as a call from God to ‘conquer the world,’ to defeat worldliness. Bloy’s Christian devotion was of the militant sort; nothing could be further removed from Bloy than a spirituality of submission in the face of a cruel and ruthless world, as advocated in the spiritual artistry of Paul Claudel or François Mauriac. It is in Léon Bloy that we find ‘the prophetic thunder of Judgement Day’.⁷¹ Bloy published two autobiographical novels, *Despairing* (*Le Désespéré*, 1887) and *The Woman who was*

⁶⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Gospel of Sufferings and The Lilies of the Field*, trans. David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing, 1948), p. 57.

⁶⁸ Lars van der Grinten, *Verzweiflung und Leiden: Søren Kierkegaards göttliche Pädagogik* (Essen: Die Blaue Eule, 2000), p. 70.

⁶⁹ Almut Furchert, *Das Leiden fassen: Zur Leidensdialektik Søren Kierkegaards* (Freiburg/Munich: Karl Alber, 2012), p. 97.

⁷⁰ Gabriele Kieser, *Christus im Armen: Zur Bedeutung der Armut und des Armen bei Léon Bloy* (Würzburg: Echter, 1996), p. 92.

⁷¹ Bila Menczer, *Tensions of Order and Freedom: Catholic Political Thought 1789-1848* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1994), p. 55.

*Poor (La Femme Pauvre, 1897)*⁷², featuring its protagonist Caïn Marchenoir (Bloy himself) as the mystic beggar who vilifies contemporary French society. These two novels clearly illustrate how Bloy, like Böll will do following him, sides with the despairing social underdog. Indeed, Bloy's preoccupation with the mythology of metaphysical suffering is unambiguously present from the first pages of *Le Désespéré*.

The novel opens with the protagonist Caïn Marchenoir writing a letter to Alexis Dulaurier to ask for money with which to bury his father who is just about to die of horror at his son's violent and improvident ways. Part one of the novel proceeds to narrate Dulaurier's financially successful but unedifying literary career and his condescending ill treatment of Marchenoir. Part two covers Marchenoir's period of spiritual retreat at the Grande Chartreuse. He exchanges letters with a prostitute, Véronique, which reveals how Marchenoir, having failed to establish a vocation for religious life, is falling in love with her. This is nevertheless a process that torments him. Upon his return to Paris, Marchenoir is confronted with one of the most ludicrous situations in world fiction. In order to avert Marchenoir's declaration of love, Véronique has cut off all her hair, sold the hair, presumably to a taxidermist, and asked a Jew of suspicious occupation to put out all of her teeth. Towards the end of the novel, Marchenoir concludes that the hairless and toothless Véronique is just as beautiful as ever. Véronique is later sent to a mental hospital, and Marchenoir is fatally wounded in an accident on his way from the asylum. Marchenoir dies without a priest and in abject poverty, the superlative crime. This synopsis seeks neither to simplify facetiously nor to accentuate the shortcomings of Bloy's first novel, but rather to draw attention to the flow of metaphysical fantasy and Bloy's manner of preoccupation with the themes of anguish, misfortune, religious faith and love that drive the work forward.

Bloy's existentialist 'Verherrlichung der Armut'⁷³ is no less discernable in his novel *La Femme Pauvre*. Its noble heroine, Clotilde Maréchal, also endures a life of

⁷² Léon Bloy, *Le Désespéré* (Paris: Mercure, 1964); *La Femme Pauvre* (Paris: Livres de Poche, 1964).

⁷³ Karl-August Götz, 'Léon Bloy', in *Christliche Dichter der Gegenwart: Beiträge zur Europäischen Literatur*, ed. Hermann Friedmann and Otto Mann (Heidelberg: Rothe, 1955), pp. 44-72, p. 45.

extreme metaphysical poverty and hardship. Clotilde's stepfather Chapuis finds Clotilde working as an artist's model and sends her to Pélipidas Gacougnol. Clotilde weeps behind the screen, unable to bring herself to remove her clothes. Gacougnol is sympathetic to the young Clotilde and, as an act of kindness, he makes it his mission to save her from the physical and moral squalor to which she is subject. He buys her new clothes and finds her a new dwelling, but it is the intellectual and social rehabilitation of the young woman upon which Gacougnol is most intent. He introduces Clotilde to a circle of young artists, including Caïn Marchenoir, the protagonist of *Le Désespéré* whom he resuscitates for *La Femme Pauvre*. A revolutionary and independent thinker, Caïn takes an active role in Clotilde's transformation into an educated and self-assured Parisienne. Her gathering resources, emotional, spiritual and physical, sustain her throughout the story. Clotilde and Gacougnol later marry and have a son, Lazare, but Gacougnol's deteriorating eyesight resulting from an accident means that he struggles to work and provide for his family. The couple is eventually forced to move into squalid living quarters, whereupon Lazare becomes gravely ill and dies. Shortly after the death of his son, Gacougnol is fatally injured after entering the burning Paris Opera House in an attempt to rescue a group of patrons trapped inside. As the story closes, Clotilde appears on the street in Paris. She is approached by some children who ask her to tell them the story of her young son: 'He was so poor. Was he often sad?' one child asks her. 'No, he was very good and never ever sad,' she replies. 'For there is only one reason for us to be sad,' says Clotilde, 'And that is that we are not saints.'

It is this theme of metaphysical suffering that Böll had become acquainted with through his reading of Kierkegaard and Bloy that also comes to lie at the heart of the German writer's fiction. Whilst Böll's empathy for his protagonists' impoverished plight is evident, his novels can nevertheless also be seen to glorify poverty; suffering may be a wretched experience, but it is nonetheless an ennobling one. A prime case in point is the early novel *Und sagte kein einziges Wort*,⁷⁴ which tells the story of Fred Bogner, a telephone operator in the ecclesiastical chancery of an unnamed city, presumably Cologne. The *Wirtschaftswunder* is in its early phases,

⁷⁴ Heinrich Böll, *Und sagte kein einziges Wort* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1953), subsequently abbreviated as US.

shop windows are full, advertising posters omnipresent. The visually forceful exhortations to ‘VERTRAU DICH DEINEM DROGISTEN AN’ or ‘NIMM DOULORIN’ to cure hangovers and avert undesired pregnancy by using the quality prophylactics of ‘Gummi Griss’ function throughout the novel as motifs symptomatic of an increasingly commercial, secular postwar West German society. In contrast to this dynamic depiction of buying, trading and consuming, Fred and his wife Käte Bogner struggle over the essentials of dignity in the midst of humiliating poverty and suffering. The beginning of the novel details how Fred has fled from the insufferable conditions of his family’s one-room apartment, the frustration and tedium of which causes him to beat his children. He feels he cannot stay at home and sustains his marriage by meeting Käte in cheap hotels and sending money home to support his family. While the novel ostensibly deals with the themes of love and family, there are also more complex socio-critical themes and agendas at play. What ultimately prompts Fred Bogner to return home is the power of grace as the ultimate solution to existential suffering and despair; Käte speaks of the power of prayer at various stages in the novel: ‘Du solltest beten, [...] wirklich. Es ist das einzige, was nicht langweilig sein kann’ and ‘das einzige [...], was helfen könnte’. She consoles her angst-ridden husband that God is not far away. Through religion the novel reveals a profoundly social agenda. Böll is critical of the protagonists’ misery in how he emphasises that their poverty is not attributable to lack of intelligence, education or hard work, but the failure of the social system itself. Whilst it may be true that Fred abuses alcohol and squanders the money intended for his family playing pinball machines, he is employed full-time and seeks extra work to provide for himself and his family. Käte does not hesitate in blaming society: ‘Das ist doch der Grund, nicht wahr, du schlägst die Kinder, weil wir arm sind?’ to which he responds: ‘die Armut hat mich krank gemacht’ [US: 140].

Under the umbrella theme of suffering, a multitude of leitmotifs typifying the existence of Fred Bogner can be observed; these include hatred, lethargy, de-centering of the individual and *Gleichgültigkeit*. Fred Bogner is an archetypal Böllian *un-hero*, one might say, who has been oppressed by forces beyond his control and comprehension. He can find no meaning in what has happened to him and his country, nothing in his present seems to him concrete or tangible. All hope of bettering his situation has dwindled to the point where his drinking, playing slot

machines and acting with brutality towards his family are representative of a suicidal fascination with defeatism. This defeatism is particularly visible in his fixation with particular slot machines which virtually never produce a winning combination, and even when they do, no money is dispensed. Every win is a loss. It is at this climax of indolence, anger and self-destruction which Fred has reached that his wife demands that he face up to his responsibility as a husband. This also perhaps the decisive *Grenzsituation* in the novel, the liminal moment which Fred is presented with the opportunity to overcome his empirical surface nature and experience a moment of genuine freedom of choice.

The theme of suffering also resides at the core of Böll's 1954 work *Der Geschmack des Brotes*, a short, yet humbling text dedicated entirely to the plight of hunger.⁷⁵ It recounts the tale of an unnamed male protagonist who, in a state of starvation and disorientation, is led by candlelight to a nun. Her innocent gaze is one of deep concern [GB: 116]. 'Ich habe Hunger', he tells her [GB: 115]. Observing a pile of stale bread rolls, 'das Wasser schoß ihm ganz schnell in den Mund' [GB: 116]: 'Brot [...], bitte Brot' [GB: 116], he pleads. As the nun hands him a roll, his chin trembles: 'er spürte, wie die Muskeln seines Mundes und seine Kiefer zuckten' [GB: 116]. The description of the plight of suffering exemplified through the treasured taste of bread⁷⁶ is taken up once more in *Der Engel schwieg*,⁷⁷ in which a 'eine Nonne in dunkelblauem Habit' [ES: 7] offers the weary protagonist Hans Schnitzler a morsel of bread: 'Wieder lief ihm das Wasser flink und lau im Munde zusammen, er schluckte es herunter und sagte noch einmal leise: "Brot"' [ES: 9]. Later in the novel Böll describes the fervour with which Schnitzler eats the piece of bread:

Er brach schnell eine große Kante von dem Brot ab. Sein Kinn zitterte und er spürte, dass die Muskeln seines Mundes und seine Kiefer zuckten. Dann grub er die Zähne in die unebene weiche Bruchstelle und aß. Das Brot war alt, [...]; aber es schmeckte so süß. Er grub immer weiter mit seinen Zähnen,

⁷⁵ Heinrich Böll, *Der Geschmack des Brotes* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1954); subsequently abbreviated as GB.

⁷⁶ Böll's preoccupation with the theme of bread also evokes Wolfgang Borchert's short tale 'Das Brot'; cf. Wolfgang Borchert, 'Das Brot' in *Das Gesamtwerk* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1949), pp. 304-306.

⁷⁷ Heinrich Böll, *Der Engel schwieg* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1992); subsequently abbreviated as ES.

nahm auch die lederne bräunliche Kruste, packte dann den Laib in seine Hände und brach ein neues Stück ab. [ES: 9-10]

The power of these descriptions lies not just in their physicality; the act of consumption becomes almost an out-of-body experience. Every detail of movement is comprehended and cherished: ‘dann spürte er rings um seinen Mund die Berührung des Brotes wie eine trockene Zärtlichkeit’ [GB: 116]. Standing symbolically for the body of Christ, the eating of bread becomes a moment of mystical union. Eating the simplest things of life is an archetypally Böllian motif which amalgamates human pain and joy, yet crucially emphasises the non-mutually exclusive nature of these conditions. It is only in experiencing true *Leiden* that joy can have any authentic significance. To reiterate the Kierkegaardian maxim, the significance of one’s life *corresponds exactly to one’s suffering*.

The 1954 novel *Haus ohne Hüter*⁷⁸ likewise probes the metaphysics of poverty and hardship. Martin Bach and Heinrich Brielach are two eleven-year-olds in the same class at school. The former knows no material needs, but is emotionally under-nourished; his widowed mother has since retreated into an illusory world where she lives out her life with her late husband, the now famous anti-fascist soldier-poet, Raimund Bach. Heinrich, by way of stark contrast, is burdened with responsibility. Destitution has taught him early economic maturity and forces him to learn arithmetic on the black market. Böll also explores the plight of Heinrich’s mother, who is compelled to deal with egoistic lovers and coerced into a so-called ‘Onkel-Ehe’. Within the thematic framework of orphans, widows, friendship and social hierarchy, Böll we find once again exploring the notions of human suffering, social justice and personal responsibility.

The theme of suffering finds its most powerful expression, however, in Böll’s early novel draft *Der Engel schwieg*. It tells the story of the thirty-one year old *Heimkehrer* Hans Schnitzler who worked as a bookseller before the war. On May 8, 1945, he returns home, where he finds himself immediately confronted with the

⁷⁸ Heinrich Böll, *Haus ohne Hüter* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1954).

overwhelming material and spiritual chaos of his native city in which the ruins stand as a symbol for Germany, as in the following passage:

Die Haustür war vom Luftdruck herausgeschleudert worden; ein Teil hing noch an den Angeln, schwere Scharniere mit Holzfetzen. [...] Der Haufen Dreck, der sich über ihr türmte, brach zusammen, als er daran stieß. [...] Es war ein schönes, herrschaftliches Haus gewesen. [ES:25]

During the war, Schnitzler had been condemned to death after attempting to desert, but with the help of Sergeant Gompertz he managed to escape. Shortly afterwards, Gompertz is shot and killed by his countrymen and Schnitzler adopts the latter's identity by taking his identification tag. After his return home, Schnitzler decides to tell his story to Gompertz's widow. His experience is one of suffering and plight: he is forced to eat whatever he can find. At one point we read: 'Obwohl er Hunger hatte, spürte er eine leichte Übelkeit, als das Zeug im Topf heiß wurde und sein Geruch sich verstärkte, [...] künstlich und ekelhaft roch es' [ES:74]; he struggles for shelter and warmth, and he encounters great difficulty obtaining false identity papers with which to evade imprisonment, not realising that the Allies have been occupying the city for several days already. His efforts are ultimately rewarded when Schnitzler meets Regina Unger, who not only takes care of his papers, but also helps him to obtain living quarters and food. Hans and she soon start an intimate relationship, although their mutual love is hampered by the deprivations that so widely characterised the aftermath of World War Two and the circumstances dominating widespread destruction of Germany's inner cities.

The reader eventually learns that Schnitzler und Regina are both as damaged as the city they live in: Schnitzler's wife was killed during a bombardment and Regina's baby, conceived after an encounter with a stranger, died shortly after birth. Regina is still numbed by the recent loss of her child, yet the couple manage to find peace and solace in Regina's half-demolished house. Their love is symbolic of safety and *Heimat*, and is representative of the simple joy that derives from *ein menschliches Zusammenleben*. Their companionship is the epitome of authenticity in a time of loss and privation, but also a sign of revolt against conventional morals. Thus Hans refers to Regina as his wife although the couple are not lawfully married; their love is

defined as authentic inasmuch as it defies such externalities as moral codes or the expectations of others. Lying in bed with Regina, Hans at one point painfully recollects ‘ich war weit weg gewesen, sehr weit weg und hatte viel Schmerz gesehen, Tod und Blut, ich hatte Angst gehabt’ [ES: 132], yet Regina’s soft voice soothes him. Feeling her warm breath, Hans speaks of a happiness that he had never known or experienced before [ES: 133]. Authenticity is portrayed in the novel as a process of self-realisation, and Böll shows us that this self-realisation is as dependent on ‘the other’ as it is in ourselves. It is such values as self-realisation, community and sharing that, for Böll, contribute to the authentic sense of what truly matters in life.

There are two other characters in the novel who also exhibit a capacity to live in freedom and authenticity amidst the rubble: the chaplain from Hans’s parish and Gompertz’s widow. The former proves to be a confidant of Schnitzler, as well as a man who knows how to practise Christian brotherly love. Hans receives food and cigarettes from this chaplain at regular intervals. Elisabeth Gompertz shares her late husband’s inheritance with the poor people of the city; on her deathbed she gives her last money to the priest. The great inauthentic counterexample – the symbol of the ‘inhumane Gegenwart’ – is Dr. Fischer, who has the same father-in-law as the altruistic Elisabeth Gompertz. He considers giving Willy Gompertz’s money to the poor an act of pure folly. Fischer was the former advisor to the powerful archbishop and after the war he – in an example of Böll’s cynicism as regards institutionalised religion – became editor of the Christian magazine *Das Gotteslamm*. He, like Frau Schnier in *Ansichten eines Clowns*, stands for the refined and ecocentric aesthete who suffers from boredom and for the opportunistic money-grubber. He also, in this novel, epitomises the Bloyian maxim *le sang du pauvre c’est l’argent*, a motif that resounds throughout *Der Engel schwieg*. Just as during the war Fischer sympathized with the Nazis, he now, after 1945, knows how to exploit the new postwar reality. Yet the smell of blood clings to his ever-increasing fortune. In the following quotation allusions to Judas’ betrayal are purposefully implied: ‘Wenn er die Tür [of his safe] öffnete, kam ihm eine heftige süßliche Wolke entgegen, süßlicher Dreck, der den Begriff Bordell in ihm auslöste – aber es fiel ihm ein, dass es Blutgeruch war, der sehr verdünnte, verfeinerte Geruch von Blut’ [ES: 122]. At this juncture, the Bloyian poverty/blood-money theme is particularly evident.

Through this novel – which sadly remained unpublished during the author’s lifetime – Böll encourages his reader to envisage hope for the future by revealing the possibilities for authenticity amidst the total disorganization of the here and now. His novel begins and ends with the title’s symbol: the stone angel which has been besmirched and damaged by the violence of war:

Er ging noch näher und erkannte im schwachen Licht einen steinernen Engel mit wallenden Locken, der eine Lilie in der Hand hielt; er beugte sich vor, bis sein Kinn fast die Brust der Figur berührte, und blickte lange mit einer seltsamen Freude in dieses Gesicht [...]. [ES:7]

At the end of the novel, following the burial of Elisabeth Gompertz, the image of the fallen angel once more comes back into focus; it is now described thus:

[...] er hatte sein Profil im schwarzen Schlamm verborgen, und die Abflachung an der Stelle seines Hinterkopfes, wo er sich von der Säule gelöst hatte, erweckte den Eindruck, als sei er niedergeschlagen worden, sei nun an die Erde geschmiegt, um zu weinen oder zu trinken, sein Gesicht lag in einer Schlammfütze, seine schwarzen Locken waren mit Dreck bespritzt und seine runde Wange trug einen Lehmflecken; nur sein bläuliches Ohr war makellos, und ein Stück seines zerbrochenen Schwertes lag neben ihm; ein längliches Stück Marmor, das er weggeworfen hatte. [ES:188]

Yet in the midst of debris and rubble, and despite its physical destruction and metaphysical suffering, this symbol of hope and angelic beauty remains, as the ‘seltsame Freude’ of the opening scene shows, a portent of piety, comfort and hope for the protagonist. What essentially unites Kierkegaard, Bloy and Böll as three Christian writers and thinkers within a metaphysical framework is how they all describe the experience of suffering as both a transcendental and life-affirming one. The individual’s pain and anguish become a thorny path to freedom and authenticity through which Man can realise his true essence. Pschera explains this existential notion as follows:

Wenn Gott, der das Böse vorhersah, als er die Welt schuf, diese Welt dennoch zuließ, dann deshalb, weil dieses Böse die Möglichkeit in sich birgt, den Menschen zum Höheren zu führen, ihn zu sublimieren. Durch den Schmerz – und [...] durch die Liebe – wird es dem Menschen erst möglich, sich vor Gott zu rehabilitieren. Der Schmerz erst bringt den Menschen zu sich.⁷⁹

Kierkegaard, Bloy and Böll all regard suffering as a path to individual and authentic self-affirmation. As suggested earlier, suffering establishes the individual's vitality, combative spirit, morality, fears, ideas and acts, as well as that which the individual has neglected or failed to do. In a metaphysical sense, a successful and meaningful human life is not characterised through having overcome suffering; 'vielmehr geht es einem gelungenen Leben darum,' Pschera explains, 'im Schmerz zu bestehen'.⁸⁰ A life without hardship 'endet in sich selbst';⁸¹ it is a life in which the possibilities *des eigentlichen Menschseins* are essentially never revealed. Ernst Jünger later echoed these notions in his essay 'Über den Schmerz' of 1934, which opens with the proclamation: 'Nenne mir Dein Verhältnis zum Schmerz, und ich will Dir sagen, wer Du bist!' Jünger too argues that 'pain' (as opposed to *Leiden*, which is a predominantly psychological concern) constitutes an *Ausgangspunkt* from which human beings, individual circumstances and society as a whole can be determined, since it is the last 'Wert' capable of withstanding the disintegration of all values'.⁸² These metaphysical sentiments also evoke Blanc de Saint-Bonnet's maxim: 'tout homme se fait comme sa douleur' – every man is shaped by his own suffering.⁸³

It is specifically, and tellingly, this aspect of theistic existentialist thinking that defines itself in stark contrast to aspects of Nietzschean doctrine. Nietzsche looked upon suffering and empathy, passion and compassion, as prime contributory factors in Christianity's enfeeblement of the *menschlicher Substanz*. Suffering for Nietzsche is a negation of human life: 'dieser depressive und contagiöse Instinkt,' he writes,

⁷⁹ Pschera, *Léon Bloy*, p. 100.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ernst Jünger, 'Über den Schmerz', in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 7: *Essays I: Betrachtungen zur Zeit* (Stuttgart: Klett Cotta, 1980), pp. 143-191, p. 145.

⁸³ Blanc de Saint-Bonnet, *De La Doleur* (Grenoble: Million, 2008), p.109.

‘kreuzt jene Instinkte, welche auf Erhaltung und Werterhöhung des Lebens aus sind: er ist ebenso als *Multiplikator* des Elends wie als *Conservator* alles Elenden ein Hauptwerkzeug der *décadence* – Mitleiden überredet zum Nichts!’⁸⁴ For this reason Nietzsche portrays Christianity as a form of nihilism. For Nietzsche, suffering can never be life-affirming; it renders the individual weak and helpless, constituting a ‘Kennzeichen des Untergangs’.⁸⁵ Conversely, suffering for Kierkegaard, Bloy and Böll can only serve to lead mankind towards life, not away from it. It is through pain that the individual is able to fully individualise his or her worldly mission and purpose.

BÖLL AND FRENCH EXISTENTIALISM

Whilst parallels can be drawn between Kierkegaard’s, Bloy’s and Böll’s thematic engagement with the existentialist themes of suffering, freedom, authenticity and angst, Böll’s thinking, in the course of its development and maturation in the mid-to-late 1950s and 1960s, can also be seen to take increasing influence from diverse aspects of more secular twentieth-century French existentialism. As I shall illustrate, these traces are most evident in Böll’s 1963 novel *Ansichten eines Clowns*, as well as his *Billard um halb zehn* (1959) and *Dr. Murkes gesammeltes Schweigen* (1955). Before exploring these works in greater detail, I will begin by surveying the shades of Sartrean existentialism that colour some of Böll’s theoretical writing throughout the 1950s and 60s.

An obvious starting point of any such analysis must be the concept of ‘littérature engagée’, a term virtually synonymous with French existentialism and the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre, but also, to some degree, with Heinrich Böll. In 1944 Sartre published the essay ‘La République du Silence’ in which he portrays the Occupation through the prism of his existentialist ideas. He begins challengingly with words that would incite painful and difficult memories of Vichy France’s four-year long subservience to German occupying forces:

⁸⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Antichrist: Fluch auf das Christentum* (Berlin: Hofenberg, 2013), p. 7.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.102.

An all-powerful police sought to force us into silence, every word became as precious as a declaration of principle; because we were persecuted, each of our gestures carried the weight of a commitment. The often frightful circumstances of our struggle enabled us finally to live, undisguised and fully revealed, that awful, unbearable situation we call the human condition.⁸⁶

What Sartre describes here is his period of occupation working with the *résistance*,⁸⁷ and his application of the term ‘commitment’ refers to a philosophical and moral conflict in which each individual finds himself: freedom can only be realised through engagement, in counteraction to worldly circumstances. Shortly following the end of the period of German occupation Sartre moulded his general concept of engagement into a corresponding literary theory and after 1945 posited his theory of ‘engagement’ as a necessary intervention of the writer into the political sphere. In essence, Sartre’s notion was wholly a question of human liberation. For the postwar avant-garde the *résistance* had become an educational process; it taught them that the freedom to observe, to imagine and to write, like freedom itself, must be defended at all costs. Every letter and every word was a deed. The task of the *résistance*, and indeed any political or idealistic act of defiance, was ultimately to enforce the necessity and obligation of writers to address their historical epoch and therein define the condition of freedom for the individual.

The experience of war thus shaped Sartre’s understanding of individual freedom, a process which involved moving away from individualistic philosophy and towards a philosophy of action and political engagement. What is also distinctly existentialist about the French philosopher’s reflections on the *résistance*, most palpable in his essay ‘Paris sous l’occupation’ (1945), is his treatment of this period as an

⁸⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Republic of Silence*, ed. A.J. Liebling, trans. Ramon Guthrie (New York: Harcourt, 1947), pp. 498-500, p. 499.

⁸⁷ The degree to which Sartre actively fought in the resistance movement remains disputed. According to Annie Cohen-Solal, Sartre had been sent to the Front in the spring of 1940, and on June 21, 1940, he was captured and imprisoned in a POW camp by Trier. Following his release in March 1941 the formerly apolitical Sartre returned to Paris and formed the resistance group ‘Socialisme et liberté’. He also produced a wealth of articles for underground papers. His combative contribution to the resistance nevertheless appears to have been slight. His subversive play *Les Mouches*, for instance, could not have been published without ratification from German censors, an act which was both self-serving and undermined the heroism of resistance fighters; cf. Annie Cohen-Solal, *Sartre 1905-1980* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1988), p. 245ff.

existentialist boundary situation; the Resistance, as a solitary historical moment, came to constitute a departure point for transcendent thinking, for individual self-awareness, and the enabling of the individual to realise his or her potentialities and self-being. The Occupation, dehumanisation and petrification of human beings, Sartre writes,

was so intolerable that many people, in order to escape from it and to recover their future, threw themselves into the Resistance. Strange future, barred by suffering, prison, death, but at least we procured it by our own hands. [...] The Resistance was nothing more than an individual solution. [...] In our eyes it had above all a symbolic value.⁸⁸

When confronted with a tyrannical, oppressive, angst-inducing *situation* of such magnitude, the individual finds himself at a metaphysical boundary, free to choose his course of action, to passively accept his lot or to rebel against the afflictions that plague him. The act of resistance *is* freedom in that it offers the permanent ability to each individual to transcend his or her present state and situation. In this way, subjugation enables the absolute freedom of the individual, it renders the 'dehumanised' humanised, the disguised 'undisguised',⁸⁹ a notion which Sartre encapsulates in the ostensibly paradoxical yet archetypally existentialist declaration: 'We were never freer than during German Occupation'.⁹⁰

Böll's notion of literary commitment, as it comes into fruition in his momentous 1952 essay 'Bekenntnis zur Trümmerliteratur', spawned, much like Sartre's 'littérature engagée', from the social, political, and cultural upheaval of his ravaged, war-ridden homeland. Böll can essentially be seen to sympathise with Sartre's insistence that individual acts and gestures are laden with individual responsibility and commitment. Böll similarly concedes that the role of the writer is unique in that he is obliged to intervene in the political sphere in order to bring out the deeper

⁸⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Paris under the Occupation', trans. Lisa Lieberman, *Raritan* 24, no. 3, Winter 2005, pp. 136-153, p. 151.

⁸⁹ Sartre, 'The Republic of Silence', p. 499.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 498 ('Jamais nous n'avons été plus libres que sous l'occupation allemande').

reality of a situation. Böll elucidates this concept in his 1952 essay, in which he insists that writers should not play 'Blinde Kuh'⁹¹:

Merkwürdig, fast verdächtig war nur der vorwurfsvolle, fast gekränkte Ton, mit dem man sich dieser Bezeichnung bediente: man schien uns zwar nicht verantwortlich zu machen dafür, dass Krieg gewesen, dass alles in Trümmern lag, nur nahm man uns offenbar übel, dass wir es gesehen hatten und sahen, aber wir hatten keine Binde vor den Augen und sahen es: ein gutes Auge gehört zum Handwerkszeug des Schriftstellers.⁹²

In the same essay, Böll develops the theory of literary commitment by describing a scenario in which a writer looks into a cellar to see a baker kneading dough. Much as in Sartrean thinking, every word is an act laden with responsibility. The writer's eye perforates the superficial reality of the situation, and he employs the power of his imagination to detail the aspects of that man's existence that are not ostensibly visible: 'er raucht Zigaretten, er geht ins Kino, sein Sohn ist in Russland gefallen, dreitausend Kilometer weit liegt er begraben am Rande eines Dorfes'.⁹³ As Frank Finlay explains in his study on Böll's aesthetic thinking, Böll is acting out his duty as a writer 'to preserve, or to reconstruct' reality as he witnesses it.⁹⁴

Like Sartre, Böll too approaches the task of writing as a necessary intervention into the 'greater sphere', be it political, religious, economic or social. It is the writer's obligation to take action and address the ills of his or her historical epoch. Some examples of Böll's creative writing can be used to illustrate aspects of this discussion, in this particular case, Böll's critical stance towards institutionalised Catholicism. In the first episode of his *Irishes Tagebuch* of 1957, Böll details how, after failing to secure a place to sleep for the night on a ship travelling to Ireland, he is offered a seat next to a priest. They begin a conversation with a young Irish émigré who is travelling home to visit her family. The woman has become disillusioned by the experiences away from her native Ireland, not least in the painful recognition that

⁹¹ Heinrich Böll, 'Bekenntnis zur Trümmerliteratur', in *Das Heinrich Böll Lesebuch*, ed. Viktor Böll (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1982), pp. 96-100, p. 96.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Böll, 'Bekenntnis', p. 98.

⁹⁴ Finlay, *On the Rationality of Poetry*, p. 54.

Catholic doctrine offers no refuge or sanctuary against the harsh realities of the modern world. The priest attempts to comfort her, yet his insistence that religious devotion is the solution to her distress is ultimately futile. The discussion ends abruptly, and Böll, with his ‘gutes Auge’, adds the following observation:

Er lehnte sich seufzend zurück, klappte den Mantelkragen hoch; vier Sicherheitsnadeln hatte er als Reserve innen auf dem Revers stecken: vier, die an einer fünften, quergesteckten, hin und her schaukelten unter den leisen Stößen des Dampfers, der in die graue Dunkelheit hinein auf die Insel der Heiligen zufuhr.⁹⁵

The skilful eye of the writer enables him to see the safety pins behind the cleric’s collar, a seemingly insignificant observation yet one creatively employed by Böll to put the priest’s conversation with the young Irish woman into a larger context. The pins are a device through which Böll thematises the Church’s attempt to safeguard an image of decency and formality. Yet the ‘safety pin’, as it features at various stages throughout Böll’s narrative, always constitutes a mode of fabrication, a ‘Zeichen der Improvisation’. The safety pin becomes a metaphor for the individual’s concealment of reality, be it financial hardship, deteriorating health or a position of spiritual authority. The pin also symbolises the transitory repair of ruptures, separations and breakages. One can accordingly interpret the priest’s reserve of pins as Böll directing his reader’s attention to the fundamental fabrications, superficialities and failings of the Catholic Church when asked to account for the disquieting realities of contemporary society. Like Sartre, Böll is a writer unfailingly committed to his own times and who believes it to be the author’s mission, be it in whatever sphere, to observe, to write, to question, to confront and, if necessary, to oppose.

There are nevertheless clear lines of demarcation between Böll’s and Sartre’s existentialist aesthetic credo. Whilst Böll upholds the author’s obligation to safeguard the depiction of reality, what is unique about Böll’s ideology is its profoundly humanistic nature. Böll always sides with ‘the seemingly insignificant

⁹⁵ Heinrich Böll, *Irishes Tagebuch* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2007), p. 16.

people who do not find their way into the history books'.⁹⁶ For Böll, literary commitment implies, if not even revolves around, 'the portrayal of the fate of lowly individuals who are the casualties and refuse of history'.⁹⁷ This preoccupation with and concern for the freedom and rights of society's 'Abfall',⁹⁸ outsiders, pariahs, underdogs, those who have been marginalised by a hostile world, will be revisited again later when we look at the Camusean underpinnings of existentialism in Böll's writing.

Böll's commitment to engaged, realistic and critical writing has resulted in the popular application of the epithet 'engagierter Schriftsteller' in Böll scholarship from an early date, as Reich-Ranicki observed when he defined engagement as the word which dominated the critical reception of Böll's work: 'Hier haben wir das entscheidende Stichwort', he writes, continuing: 'Denn der Streit der deutschen Kritik um Böll ist zum großen Teil nichts anderes als ein Streit um die engagierte Literatur schlechthin'.⁹⁹ Indeed, a close reading of Böll's critical writings reveals a myriad of pronouncements concerning 'engagierte Literatur', yet despite the points of commonality with Sartrean commitment, Böll repeatedly questions the validity of the term. In an interview with *Le Monde*, for instance, he confesses his unease with the expression *écrivain engagé*; when asked if he considers his writing to represent a new form of committed literature, and if, in this regard, he views himself as a descendant of Sartrean aestheticism, Böll responds by first reminding his interviewer that he, unlike Sartre, had been only too happy to accept his Nobel prize for literature, before proceeding to put in question the literary category: 'Was ist ein engagierter Schriftsteller? Ich habe diesen Ausdruck nicht sehr gern. Er wirkt so, als ob man eine Fahne vor sich her trüge. Sie haben in Frankreich den Ausdruck *homme de lettres*. Er sagt mir viel mehr zu'.¹⁰⁰ Böll also rejects the differentiation between *committed* and *pure* literature; in 1960 he published the essay 'Bücher verändern die

⁹⁶ Finlay, *ibid.*, p. 54.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

⁹⁸ The term 'Abfall' features predominantly in Böll's 'Frankfurter Vorlesungen', in *Heinrich Böll: Werke: Essayistische Schriften und Reden 2: 1964-1972* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1977), pp. 34-92.

⁹⁹ Marcel Reich-Ranicki, *Deutsche Literatur in West und Ost: Prosa seit 1945* (Munich: Piper, 1965), p. 85.

¹⁰⁰ Heinrich Böll, "'Weil dieses Volk so verachtet wurde, wollte ich dazugehören...': Interview mit Jean-Louis Rambures", in *Heinrich Böll Werke: Interviews I: 1961-1978*, ed. Bernd Balzer (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1979), pp. 243-250, p. 244.

Welt', the subtitle of which, – 'Der Streit um die engagierte Literatur ist müßig' – infers how the differentiation between 'committed' and 'pure' writing was a waste of time.¹⁰¹ The reason for this lies in Böll's belief that all literature is capable of exercising social influence, whether it be the mid-nineteenth-century socially critical fiction of Charlotte Brontë, or the twentieth-century *l'art pour l'art* of Gottfried Benn. Böll maintains that one of the ironies of writing lies in the phenomenon that a book seemingly lacking in any underlying political intention may contribute more to changing consciousness than one which seeks direct political influence. This conviction is most clearly articulated in Böll's 'Zweite Wuppertaler Rede' in which he quotes extensively from Benn's speech 'Soll die Dichtung das Leben bessern?'¹⁰² In his own speech, Böll approves of Benn's strict distinction between *Kunstträger*, artist, and the *Kulturträger*, the aesthete or, so to speak, 'guardian of culture'. Böll concludes in the *Frankfurter Vorlesungen* that he ultimately cannot influence the manner in which his own literary products are received by society:

Doch selbst den großen Verkündern der Solitude des Dichters — George, Benn, Jünger — sind die Gesellschaft und das Publikum nicht erspart geblieben, und es ist nicht Ironie, sondern Tragik, dass auch Musil nicht davon verschont geblieben ist. Das geschriebene Wort, erst recht das gedruckte, ist in dem Augenblick, wo es geschrieben, gedruckt wird, sozial vorhanden, es ist da — mag einer Publikum, Gesellschaft, Veränderung der Welt wollen oder nicht.¹⁰³

That is to say, 'engagierte Literatur' is perhaps less a function of authorial interpretation than readerly reception. Sartre's is of course not the only French existentialist influence on Böll's artistic creed. The ideas of earlier French thinker, the Catholicist personalist thinker Emmanuel Mounier, are arguably no less important. In fact, in his writings from the 1930s that predate Sartre's 'What is Literature?', Mounier was the first to introduce the term 'engagement' into the French cultural

¹⁰¹ Heinrich Böll, 'Bücher verändern die Welt: der Streit um die engagierte Literatur ist müßig', in *Heinrich Böll: Werke: Kölner Ausgabe*, vol. 12, ed. Árpád Bernáth (Cologne/Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2002), pp. 34-36.

¹⁰² Heinrich Böll, 'Zweite Wuppertaler Rede', in *Heinrich Böll: Aufsätze, Kritiken, Reden* (Cologne/Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1967), pp. 483-487.

¹⁰³ Heinrich Böll, 'Frankfurter Vorlesungen' in *Heimat und keine: Schriften und Reden, 1964-1968* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1985), pp. 30-88, p. 36.

sphere.¹⁰⁴ The overarching affinity which, on a general level, unites Böll and Sartre with Mounier are the interlinking notions of authorship and commitment. Mounier's 'engagement' was crucially accompanied by the term 'action' which entailed a sense of artistic duty, namely a need to move away from capitalistic maxims towards a socialist, specifically Christian commonwealth. Indeed, his trust in the potency of the written word is one which is ultimately derived from the shared Christian belief in the absolute truth of God's word, of the *logos*. It was the French literary magazine *Esprit* which provided Mounier's *personnalisme*¹⁰⁵ with a spiritual and literary platform, the primary tenets of which are distinctly existentialist in nature: be an active force, embrace commitment and autonomous participation, for this is the 'action' of 'engagement'.¹⁰⁶ Haunted, as were many other *non-conformistes* by the magnitude of what they saw as a crisis of civilisation, Mounier became convinced that 'pure intellect' would ultimately reveal its insufficiency. It is ultimately, according to Mounier, impartiality, passivity and inactivity that result in abstention when the great issues of the day are being decided. 'L'*Esprit*,' Mounier wrote in 1933, 'is an engagement, and one engages oneself with all one's soul and all of one's days'.¹⁰⁷ Yet, as with many other later 'engaged' individuals, this did not imply for Mounier a simple descent into the political realm. As Schalk observes in his study of 'engagement', Mounier felt urged to 'calm down and be realistic about possibilities for success' before taking drastic action.¹⁰⁸ The writer, after all, was still part of an elite of intellectuals with an ultimate final responsibility for critical judgement, regardless of what in the end the judgement may be. Such intellectuals are essentially unified in the belief that the severity of social crisis demands that they reconsider their hitherto detached and secondary roles.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Cf. David L. Schalk, *The Spectrum of Political Engagement: Mounier, Benda, Nizan, Brasillach, Sartre* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Emmanuel Mounier, *Personalism*, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1952).

¹⁰⁶ Mounier also referred to this as 'incarnation', a theological derivative of the notions 'action' and 'engagement', cf. Noureddine Zaza, *Étude critique la notion d'engagement chez Emmanuel Mounier* (Doctoral thesis, University of Geneva, 1955).

¹⁰⁷ Schalk, *The Spectrum of Political Engagement*, p. 19.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹⁰⁹ Important to mention in this regard is the right-wing radical group *Ordre Nouveau*, formed in 1930 under the impetus of its leading thinker Arnaud Dandieu (1897-1933). Its members were a mixed bag of theists and agnostics, be they committed neophytes of different creeds or Nietzschean free-thinkers close to Surrealism, yet they were unified by personalist doctrine, defined predominantly in anthropological as opposed to theological terms. In their common analysis of the failure by previous and existing movements to make a significant impact on the French political landscape, the group's members dedicated themselves to the idea of a revolutionary, international youth movement and the

This brief overview already implies various points of divergence between Mounier's and Sartre's doctrines. This conflict becomes particularly acute where the themes of freedom and Man's relationship with Man are concerned. Absolute freedom, the concept of which Mounier attributes to Sartre, does not exist in Mounier's existentialist view. Firstly, there *is* such a thing as human nature, otherwise there would be no history and no community, that is no unity of humanity in space and time. This is crucial for Mounier as this unity implies the equality of all members of the human race and the absence of any differences of civilisation, race or caste. Secondly, existence is given as well as created, that is, there are given situations and circumstances which inevitably put constraints on Man's freedom. Mounier claims that Sartre is wrong in his assertions that freedom is a necessity, because if it were, the individual would not be able to make it his own, but would use it blindly. Every situation, according to Mounier, leads to a range of various potential options and outcomes, and Man uses his freedom to decide among them. Freedom is ultimately a gift to be accepted or refused. Indeed, it is not 'welded [*rivée*] to a personal being as a condemnation, it is offered to him as a gift'.¹¹⁰ As a Christian thinker, this possibility of refusal explains the existence of sin: the individual cannot choose what Mounier calls 'la valeur' (value) if 'la non-valeur' (non-value) does not exist. God has not made a perfect creature, but has allowed man to choose whether he wishes to transcend his condition or not.

Yet the aspect of Sartrean existentialism that Mounier seems most keen to criticise is the one that overlaps most closely with Böll's aesthetic thinking, namely, the individual's relationship with 'the other'. Sartre contends that each person's freedom can only have a relationship of dominance or subservience to that of other people. Mounier, by contrast, sees this individualised freedom, confronting a hostile world, as a self-preservation mechanism and a jarring in communication that results in narcissism and estrangement. From his Christian viewpoint, individual freedom

formation of a new individual. Theirs too was a philosophy based on an affirmation of the person. They were vigorously critical of fascism and of capitalism as denials of the values of integrity and freedom of the person. They also affirmed anti-productivist communism and regionalism, in which personalism is defined as affirming the person insofar as he or she acts or is engaged in a creative struggle. Its emphasis on the realization of humanity and the freedom of man through action render personalism a prefiguration of twentieth-century existentialism.

¹¹⁰ Mounier, *Personalism*, p. 58.

should lead to an opening out towards others and a concern for the general freedom of the other. The well-being and security of others is also a central value within Böll's Christian treatment of freedom, as we saw already in our treatment of *Der Engel schwieg*. Freedom is for him the encountering of that which is other to me, and this should unite men with other men, be they strangers, pariahs, or society's 'little men' who have been ostracised by a hostile world. To see oneself from the point of view of others, taking responsibility for others, identifying with their destiny, showing sympathy for and generosity towards them, and forever expressing one's devotion to them are all facets of Mounier's existentialist credo which readily echo throughout Böll's fictional universe. Indeed, Fred Bogner's human failure in *Und sagte kein einziges Wort* may be that he is unable to properly express his devotion to and responsibility for his family. This particular thematic concern will be dealt with more extensively in the subsequent discussion of Böll and Albert Camus.

Reflecting on these three key existentialist concepts, engagement, freedom and 'the other', one final point needs to be raised, namely the question of authorship and intentionality; is it the aim of the engaged writer to simply bear witness or is he striving for action in the form of concrete temporal success? For Sartre, engagement and action are by no means passive terms; he remarks:

The 'engaged' writer knows that words are action. He knows that to reveal is to change and that one can only reveal by planning to change. He has given up the impossible dream of giving an impartial picture of society and the human condition. [...] He knows that his words are [...] 'loaded pistols'.¹¹¹

For Mounier, on the other hand, action is 'not essentially directed towards success, but toward bearing witness (*témoignage*)'.¹¹² Despite Mounier's insistence in *Personalism (Le Personnalisme)* that impartiality, passivity and inactivity lead to abstention, his position appears to gradually shift focus. For Mounier, it is the detached critical judgement of the writer that will triumph over his physical action. As Schalk observes, for Mounier true engagement is not defined through 'the violent

¹¹¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?*, p. 17.

¹¹² Cf. R. William Rauch, *Politics and Belief in Contemporary France: Emmanuel Mounier and Christian Democracy: 1932-1950* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1972), p. 76ff.

action of that archetypal figure in twentieth-century fact and fiction usually known as the “adventurer””.¹¹³ Mounier’s *témoignage* was readily criticised and the *Esprit* movement was charged with political impotence. Kenneth Douglas, for instance, accepts that Mounier ‘may be sowing seeds for the future’, but he condemns Mounier’s failure to take ‘an effective political stand at this hour’.¹¹⁴ The strengths and deficiencies of these divergent positions are not the main focus here, however; of more relevance is the degree to which Böll, as a fellow committed writer and sympathiser of both Sartre’s and Mounier’s existentialist writing, aligns himself with either of these competing theoretical standpoints.

Remarkably it can be shown that Böll thematises and objectifies *both* concepts of *active* engagement and *témoignage* in his literary works. These themes are perhaps most acutely explored in the novel *Billard um halbzehn*,¹¹⁵ which tells the tale of three generations of a Cologne family from the perspective of a single day, the eightieth birthday of the esteemed architect Heinrich Fähmel, who in 1907 built the Abbey of St. Anton. The events of the day culminate in a single firing of a gunshot by Heinrich’s wife, Johanna Fähmel, who has been held in a sanatorium since 1942 due to her ‘insane’ resistance to Nazism. Over the course of the novel, the reader learns that the central figure, Robert Fähmel, blew up the Abbey designed by his father during the Second World War. While he was under military order to obliterate the Abbey in order to clear a path for artillery fire, his *authentic* reason was to demolish Nazi structures, since the Abbey’s Monks had been followers of National Socialism. After the war Robert Fähmel seeks to eradicate all traces of the past and thus becomes caught in a web of withdrawal and inactivity. He now spends his well-regulated days in nearly complete seclusion playing billiards, comforted only by a tender concern for the hotel boy, Hugo. Robert’s son Joseph has since rebuilt the Abbey without any knowledge of the truth regarding its destruction. When he does find out he is outraged; he cannot fathom his father’s reasoning, and he believes that a building of such cultural stature and significance should have been better safeguarded. Joseph’s reaction is meant to illustrate the passive, inactive attitude

¹¹³ Schalk, *The Spectrum of Political Engagement*, p. 21.

¹¹⁴ Kenneth Douglas, ‘The French Intellectuals: Situation and Outlook’, in *Modern France: Problems of the Third and Fourth Republics*, ed. E. M. Earle (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 61-81, p. 68.

¹¹⁵ Heinrich Böll, *Billard um halbzehn* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1959).

toward the past that permeated postwar German society. Objectifying Mounier's *témoignage*, Joseph refuses to accept destruction as a permissible act of defiance, for he cannot comprehend the interrelation between the building's obliteration and the atrocities committed in the name of Hitler. His father Robert, on the other hand, once an apparent disciple of Sartrean action, freedom and authenticity, has since reverted into an inert state of inactivity and withdrawal. Under pressure from societal forces we can assume that he has disowned his innate freedom and become a true advocate of Sartrean *mauvaise foi*.

In exploring these existentialist categories of activity and *témoignage*, Böll divides the large ensemble of characters into metaphorical groupings of varying complicity; the *Büffel*, who believe in, oversee and practise violence in the name of engagement, activity and power, and the *Lämmer*, who remain pacifistic, inactive victims. By the end of the novel, Johanna Fähmel decides after sixteen years of imprisonment to break free from the shackles of institutional control that have for so long restricted both her physical and intellectual freedom and to strike out against one such *Büffel* by attempting to assassinate a postwar minister who has managed to effortlessly ease back into society despite his Nazi past. The complex structure of the novel as it moves from past to present, from stasis to activity demonstrates how the Fähmels each confront boundary situations, albeit at different junctures and under diverse circumstances, where they can make the choice to break out of their shell of memory and become subjects of history, or remain inactive observers who passively cling to the hope of change. As Robert C. Conard observes: 'This single day is the day on which they transcend the barrier of recollective inactivity and begin to apply their morality, derived from contemplation, to a more responsible, active life'.¹¹⁶ In doing so, Böll seeks to lay bare the submerged truths about the relationship between Germany's Nazi past and its postwar present. Here, against an existentialist backdrop, the Fähmels are forced to accept or reject the gift of individual freedom. Will they choose to *leap* and transcend their situation? Will they *choose* to be lambs or buffalos? And if they leap what course of action will they take?

¹¹⁶ Conard, *Understanding*, p. 74.

The actions of the Fähmels, be it seeking to eradicate a former Nazi or adopting the ‘lamb’ hotel boy, Hugo, are seen as new choices, directions and beginnings; they become the psychological prerequisites for future action. Even if one believes that such acts are unlikely to change or liberate society at large, since society can only be transformed through political organisations and consistent and insistent pressure, one should not conclude that such acts are without consequence, or that they cannot impact individual freedom. On the contrary, Böll’s novel seems to say, they serve to make a powerful statement and can be highly liberating. The ending of the novel thus raises the question introduced at the beginning of this section: does Böll’s novel perpetuate the attitude that the individual is a mere observer who lacks faith in the potency of his actions (Mounier’s position)?, or is the individual a dynamic force capable of securing freedom and determining history (Sartrean position)? Ultimately, the work does not appear to unequivocally advocate either position. It is important to reiterate at this juncture that the world of the novel does not necessarily reflect the world of the author, and it would be highly remiss, if not ‘[der] dümmste aller Fehler’,¹¹⁷ to assume that, in publishing such a work, Böll wishes to condone brutality and violence as the ultimate means to effect political change and existentialist freedom. Essentially, *Billard um halbzehn* seeks to capitalise on *both* Sartre’s *and* Mounier’s perspectives by exploring the inevitable consequences that arise in a situation when individuals believe that no societal solution to injustice exists. The degree to which one understands or interprets engagement is thus left for the reader to decide. Böll, unlike his existentialist counterparts Sartre and Mounier, is not seeking to be a rigorous theorist. Like in his later publication *Ansichten eines Clowns*, which in the closing scene can be seen to presage the student street protests of 1968, or in the 1974 novel *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum*, which thematises the individual’s right and responsibility to counter systemic state oppression through brute violence, *Billard um halbzehn* epitomises the maturation of Böll’s aesthetic position in how it constitutes the writer’s first attempt to offer a multi-faceted impartial public argument whose thoughts, ideas, and social points of view of the characters reach the reader and have their (albeit unknown) effect in the real world.

¹¹⁷ ‘[den] dümmsten aller Fehler begehen, Autor und Held *total* zu identifizieren’, in reference to Böll and Hans Schnier [*Ansichten eines Clowns*]; cf. Heinrich Böll, ‘Nachwort’, in *Die Fähigkeit zu trauern. Schriften und Reden 1983-1985* (Bornheim-Merten, 1986), pp. 287-300, p. 288.

The maturation of Böll's aesthetic thinking can thus be said to be founded on several strands of at times conflicting existentialist positions. Regardless of the degree to which Böll accepted or rejected the label 'engagierter Schriftsteller', there remains little doubt that Böll was intrigued by the Sartrean concept of literary commitment, the writer's purported obligation to look beyond the superficial reality of the situation, to preserve and reconstruct detail and, when and as necessary, to intervene in the public sphere. Mounier's personalist doctrine is arguably no less important for Böll; his concept of literary engagement is similarly accompanied by the notion of 'action' which entails a sense of artistic duty and responsibility towards civil society. Mounier and Böll are likewise united in their concern for 'the other' in the realisation of individual freedom, which involves empathy and understanding for the rest of humankind. Böll can nevertheless be seen to suspend his personal opinions in his novel *Billard um halbzehn*, a novel which impartially fuses both Sartre's and Mounier's positions on action and intentionality. The questions he poses about the individual's responsibility in the modern world are thereby ultimately redirected back towards his audience, putting the issue whether to act or not squarely in the reader's court.

CAMUS AND ABSURDITY

Of course, Sartre and Mounier are not the only French existentialist influences on Böll; Albert Camus (1913-1960) is arguably no less significant. In Böll's literary oeuvre, the incongruity and irrationality of human existence, apathetic protagonists, and the flight into an objective order of ready-made, institutionalised values can be seen to constitute prevailing metaphysical themes that his works have in common with Camus's. Coloured with Christian values and iconography as they are, Böll's narratives do not immediately lend themselves to a comparison with the atheistic existentialist doctrine that was current in post-war France. What a closer reading reveals, however, are clear points of thematic and ideological crossover between Böll's writing and that of the French-Algerian thinker.

Camus's writing was a source of great fascination for Böll, perhaps even more so than Sartre's. Whilst there are areas of conceptual concord between Böll and Sartre,

one is nevertheless aware of a certain ‘unüberbrückbare ideologische Distanz’,¹¹⁸ as Sander has put it. Camus, on the other hand, remains a resounding literary authority for the German writer; speaking with Ekkehart Rudolph in 1971, Böll remarked: ‘Ich glaube, für mich was das wichtigste Buch nach 1945 *Der Fremde* von Camus – Sartre, Hemingway, Faulkner: Alles kam auf uns zu, und es war ein ungeheures Erlebnis’.¹¹⁹ In 1964, Böll even went so far as to accord Camus the label of ‘religious author’: ‘[...] ich betrachte sie [Kafka, Faulkner, Bernanos] als religiöse Autoren, sogar Camus’.¹²⁰ In her essay on Böll and literary Modernism, Sander observes: ‘[Böll] nahm [...] gewissermaßen Zuflucht zu Autoren, die sein christliches Menschenbild mit ihm teilten und ihn in seinem Beharren auf einem konservativen Wertekanon stützten’.¹²¹ This assertion would certainly account for Böll’s engagement with *renouveau catholique* thinkers such as Mounier and Bloy, but Sander’s contention simultaneously triggers a need to re-examine the precise nature of the ideological relationship, or what Theodore Ziolkowski calls the ‘delicate spiritual affinity’,¹²² between the theistic writings of Böll and what are generally seen as the atheistic writings of Camus.

Before doing so, it is necessary for the purposes of this chapter to briefly consider the degree to which Camus can be classified as an existentialist thinker. This remains a point of some contention in philosophical scholarship. Indeed, many Camus scholars have opted for other labels through which to define the French Algerian’s aesthetic thinking; Jacques Ehrmann for instance recognised early in 1960 that Camus ‘has become a moralist’, at least with his publication of *The Rebel* (*L’Homme révolté*). According to Lawrence D. Kritzman, Camus is an ‘intuitive moralist’ because, in confronting the irrationality of Marxist revolt, Camus tackles the absurdity of murder and terror. In espousing the inherent goodness of humankind in *L’Homme révolté*, Camus’s politics of love and his ethos of reflective action and understanding create, as Kritzman continues, a moral imperative where human choices have a moral dimension. Others, like Peter Royal, tackle the existentialist question head on; Royal

¹¹⁸ Sander, ‘Die Last des Ungelesenen’, p. 82.

¹¹⁹ Ekkehart Rudolph, ‘Gespräch mit Heinrich Böll’, in *Protokoll zur Person: Autoren über sich und ihr Werk*, ed. E. Rudolph (Munich: List, 1971), pp. 27-43, p. 30.

¹²⁰ Interview with Alois Rummel, recorded 17. March 1964, *Bayerischer Rundfunk*; also in *Heinrich Böll: Aufsätze, Kritiken, Reden* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1967), pp. 497-501, p. 500

¹²¹ Sander, *ibid.*, p. 83.

¹²² Ziolkowski, ‘Albert Camus and Heinrich Böll’, p. 282.

recognises that conflating aspects of Camus's philosophy with Sartre's is a problematic approach, and thus concludes that Sartre is an 'existentialist phenomenologist in the grand European philosophical tradition', whereas Camus is a 'disabused heir of the Enlightenment'.¹²³ Debarati Sanyal by contrast purports that Camus is 'the idealist esthete whose luminous landscapes and classical forms so sharply contrast with the viscosity of Sartrean phenomenology'.¹²⁴ Camus also sought to delineate his intellectual credo precisely in contrast with existentialism. In 1943 he declared that the purpose of *The Myth of Sisyphus* (*Le Mythe de Sisyphe*) was to define *une pensée absurde*, that is, 'one delivered of metaphysical hope, by way of a criticism of several themes of existential philosophy'.¹²⁵ In 1944 he stated that, although existentialism constitutes 'great philosophical adventure', he believes its conclusions to be fundamentally flawed. Sartre for his part characterises Camus as a proponent not of existentialism, but of a 'coherent and profound [...] philosophy of the absurd'.¹²⁶ In November 1945, a month after the publication of the first issue of *Les Temps Modernes*, Camus famously exclaimed: 'No I am not an existentialist. [...] Sartre is an existentialist, and the only book of ideas I've written, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, is directed against the so-called existentialist philosophers'.¹²⁷ For the present purpose, however, the merits of Camus's criticism of existentialism are not the main concern – the point is simply that Camus went to considerable lengths to define himself in contrast to that movement, and within it specifically Sartrean existentialism, and that any attempt to discuss Camus within a philosophical framework should take this into account. There is of course a less methodological way in which the term 'existentialist' can be deployed, and identifying Camus with this grouping would hardly be problematic. However one might describe this broad group of writers, one can credibly catalogue Camus's writing as literature concerned with 'the problematic nature of human existence'. In any event, classifying Camus narrowly as an existentialist constitutes a singularly unhelpful way of assessing the merits of his thought, especially since he

¹²³ Cf. Michael Y. Bennett, *Reassessing the Theatre of the Absurd: Camus, Beckett, Ionesco, Genet and Pinter* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 14. ff.

¹²⁴ Debarati Sanyal, 'Broken Engagements: Sartre, Camus, and the Question of Commitment', in *Yale French Studies* 98 (2000), pp. 29-49, p. 29.

¹²⁵ Cf. John Foley, *Albert Camus: From the Absurd to Revolt* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 2.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Cf. Interview with Jeanine Delpech in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, November 15, 1945; cf. also Albert Camus, *Essais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), p. 1424.

was more a critic than an exponent of existentialism. Reading him as a ‘moralist’ or, to use his own term, as ‘an existential writer’ will go some way to help determine the values behind his philosophical writing.

For Sartre, since God does not exist, humankind is the only entity whose existence comes before its essence. As Sartre explains in ‘Existentialism is a Humanism’, ‘Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself’. Camus, like other existentialists, may argue that life has no inherent meaning, but unlike in Sartrean thinking, life for him is not made meaningful through experience or actions that affirm and define existence (the central tenet of existentialism where *existence precedes essence*), but through the use of human reason (where reason justifies the maxim *essence precedes experience*). Camus plays off the rationalist par excellence, Descartes, in forming a creed of rebellion and ethical revolt: ‘I rebel, therefore we exist’, he states categorically. In other words, one’s suffering proves that we are all human, for we all suffer, a notion that also evokes the aforementioned aspects of Kierkegaard’s and Bloy’s thinking on the ennobling capacity of metaphysical suffering. Essentially, Camus can be seen to be primarily concerned with the meaning of existence, whereas Sartre focuses on the philosophical sense of being and the existentiality of existence. This question of meaning is explored in Camus’s *The Myth of Sisyphus*, where futility is depicted as the ultimate source of human anguish. The individual longs for meaning in the universe but sees only a stifling, empty sky. Camus offers an existentialist interpretation of the Greek myth of Sisyphus, who is given the *absurd* task of forever rolling his rock up a hill, only to see it roll back down again. Sisyphus nevertheless finds pleasure in his task. Through *absurd reasoning* he has made the rock his own. He has risen above his fate, not simply through dull resignation but through *deliberate choice*, something which Fred Bogner in *Und sagte kein einziges Wort* is precisely *unable* to do. In exercising freedom to choose, Sisyphus’s decision is both liberating and life affirming. This ‘absurd hero’¹²⁸ has contemplated his torments and has reasoned that the rock and his continued defiance of the gods is his purpose in life. In reconciling oneself with

¹²⁸ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans. Justin O’Brien (New York: Random House, 2005), p. 116.

absurdity and futility, man is capable of rediscovering meaning, freedom and gratification in even the most bleak of situations.

Using this notion as an aesthetic springboard, one could argue that the writings of Camus embody the themes of absurdity, futility, existence, freedom, choice and meaning, and thus express the archetypal insights we associate with an existentialist thinker. Camus was a central figure in the intellectual life of post-war France and, along with Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, the French-Algerian essayist, novelist, dramatist and journalist played a pivotal role in the progression and philosophical maturation of twentieth-century European literature. The world of Camus can be summarised as that of a concrete man living between imminent commitment and a yearning for a transcendent eternity. Concealed within this existential tension is a deep despair. The problem entailed by a life of questionable meaning is made doubly harder: primarily because a life within absolute immanence appears pointless, and secondly because if we also assume an insatiable yearning for transcendence, the meaninglessness of immanent existence becomes even harder to endure.

By developing the notion of absurdity, the French-Algerian thinker underscores the immeasurable gap between what one thinks one knows and what one knows in reality. That is to say, even when the utter absurdity of existence stares humankind in the face, the individual pretends not to see it and continues living as though life had another purpose. This particular trait of human nature stems, according to Camus, from an irrepressible aspiration for clarity, rationality and comprehension, by virtue of which the individual searches for meaningfulness. Thus individuals are driven by an appetite for the absolute and the need to solve existential conundrums. But this human need for meaning and clarity, reasons Camus, is undermined by a dense impenetrability of the outer world. Indeed, the absolute knowledge of inner and outer reality remains, at least within the coordinates of this world, impossible. Every desire to know, every attempt to overcome the inchoate alienation, into which man has been thrown without reason, continually smashes against what Camus describes as the 'absurd walls' of unintelligibility, silence, and perishability.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 9ff.

Such themes also lie at the heart of Böll's early fiction. Central to the novel *Und sagte kein einziges Wort* is the estrangement experienced by Fred Bogner which has not ceased with the end of the war, but has in fact worsened in times of revival and prosperity. Fred's speaking with his wife on the telephone or meeting her in secluded locations is symptomatic of the couple's profound alienation from themselves, from each other, as well as from the vast, impassive society that engulfs them. Hans Schnitzler in *Der Engel schwieg* is likewise estranged from his immediate environment. Walking the streets, Schnitzler listlessly observes the rubble, debris, burned-out facades, the heavy fumes of smoke and the roar of heavy vehicles. A stranger in his once beloved native city, Schnitzler can similarly be seen to retreat into a mental state of remote isolation; we are thus told how 'jede Minute, die verstrich, wunderte er sich, dass er noch lebte' [ES: 59].

According to Camus, the self is never at peace either with its concrete interior or its external surroundings. The only certainty one is thus left with concerns one's estrangement from the world and oneself, together with the palpable verities with which life enchants us. Overall, the path mankind treads is dire in its ruthless implacability. Camus's humanity is condemned to endure a constant 'ridiculous divorce separating [its] spiritual excess and the ephemeral joys of the body,' or the 'urge toward unity' and the unfaltering awareness of fragmentation,¹³⁰ a term which unarguably evokes the de-centred and volatile existences of Böll's protagonists. As a result, Camus asserts, the lucid individual cannot but oscillate between suicide (be it physical, spiritual or philosophical) and head-on confrontation with the monstrosity of existence via consciousness, revolt and solitary action. In Böll's work, the Catholic figure of Fred Bogner does not believe in suicide. For him, as with Hans Schnitzler, life thus deteriorates into an unyielding vacillation between apathy and withdrawal.

Absurdity constitutes, as Camus explains, a 'feeling' born of the 'confrontation between the human need [for reason] and the unreasonable silence of the world'.¹³¹ 'Absurdity', Camus contends, 'springs from a comparison', or more accurately from

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 23.

¹³¹ Ibid., pp. 26.

a ‘confrontation’ between the ‘irrational [world] and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart’.¹³² As Camus makes clear, absurdity ‘depends as much on man as on the world’.¹³³ Without a human consciousness to contemplate ‘the absence of any profound reason for living’,¹³⁴ the world merely *is*. However, for individuals that possess a longing for rationality in an environment they perceive as indifferent, the world educes the feeling of absurdity or, reductively speaking, existentialist angst. When absurdity reveals itself and existence is robbed of the illusion of meaning, the individual can, according to Camus, feel angst-ridden and estranged.

This experience of existential angst is particularly acute in *Und sagte kein einziges Wort*, in which Käte Bogner’s repetition of the word ‘Angst’ is emblematic of her fraught and fragmented existence: ‘Mich hat [...] ein Schrecken ergriffen’, she begins, ‘und ich habe Angst, den Leib Christi zu essen’ [US: 145]. At a later juncture she confesses to her husband ‘Ich habe Angst vor dir, wirklich’ [US: 171] and shortly after ‘Ich hatte Angst, dich zu fragen’. Käte’s fractured existence has resulted in her every choice and action being plagued by fear and dread. The source of Käte’s, and indeed Fred’s existential angst is ultimately their vivid awareness of their deplorable state, namely their unhappy marriage and abject poverty, and their need to confront the difficult possibilities in relation to it.

Regardless of the cause, what distinguishes Camus’s understanding of existential anxiety, and what separates it from Kierkegaardian doctrine for instance, is its tendency to elicit a profound world-weariness, whereby, for Camus, suicide is the only ‘rational’ outcome: ‘Dying voluntarily implies that you have recognised, even instinctively, the ridiculous character of that habit, the absence of any profound reason for living, the insane character of that daily agitation and the uselessness of suffering’.¹³⁵ That such an encounter will inevitably end in suicide or recovery is a premise to which also Nietzsche subscribes in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, where the German philosopher declares that ‘die Redlichkeit den Ekel und den Selbstmord im

¹³² Ibid., p. 20.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

Gefolge haben würde'.¹³⁶ Whilst existentialists do not necessarily favour this outcome, and indeed Böll as a Catholic does not adopt the theme of suicide as a resolution to existential despair in his own fiction, Nietzsche, Camus and also Sartre nevertheless regard it as a possible 'solution' to the absurd; if human consciousness, particularly the human need for reason, is a prerequisite for absurdity, then the death of the human ultimately serves to eradicate the absurd.

Feelings of absurdity, according to Camus, stem from several sources. The first is the collapse of the chain of meaning in everyday life: 'the chain of daily gestures is broken', Camus observes 'in which the heart vainly seeks the link that will connect it again'.¹³⁷ Man becomes alienated and disorientated, experiencing a divorce between himself and his life, between the actor and his scenery. This can again be observed in Fred Bogner's decision to withdraw from his wife and children. Their affinity is severed, and an impenetrable wall of separation has been erected between them. Existence becomes a sequence of moments lacking a context of meaning that unites them and endows them with coherence, reducing those moments to a meaningless, disjointed routine. This oppressive sense draws its power from the yearning for a lost unity. At least implicitly, Camus assumes that only a unified context can confer meaning on the random sequence of events and isolated details. Through his approach Camus is purporting that a negative experience of an existence broken up into disjointed moments assumes meaning only through the longing for a comprehensive unity.

If *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* explores the abstract landscape of Camus's philosophical thought and the metaphysical implications of the absurd, his 1942 novel *The Stranger* (*L'Etranger*) reveals the concrete landscape of this world and the social definition of this existentialist concept. The novel explores the triviality of a world in which there is no awareness of the absurd and examines the senseless way people live (except as it is sensed by the narrator, Meursault). This is a world in which absurdity prevails, since an inability to discard convention prevents authentic feeling and creative thought. Camus establishes Meursault as the central figure, a negative energy who brings out the absurdity of prevailing viewpoints and actions. The

¹³⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Die fröhliche Wissenschaft', p. 464.

¹³⁷ Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 11.

actions of the protagonist are presented as meaningless and inconsequential, relayed in a flat, emphasised sequence so that no deed is of greater significance than any other. The opening lines of the novel capture the protagonist's apathy and detachment: 'Mother died today. Or, maybe, yesterday; I can't be sure. The telegram from the Home says: YOUR MOTHER PASSED AWAY. FUNERAL TOMORROW. DEEP SYMPATHY. Which leaves the matter doubtful; it could have been yesterday'.¹³⁸ Meursault attends his mother's funeral not out of love or sorrow, but out of social convention. The following day he meets Marie by chance, and the two have sex. Meursault reads an old newspaper, sees spectators returning from a football game, decides to eat his supper, and listlessly agrees to Marie's suggestion of marriage only because he thinks it would give her pleasure: 'I said I didn't mind [...]. It had no importance really'.¹³⁹ Meursault later finds himself walking alone on a beach and observing a man sleeping in a patch of shade. Driven by the oppressive mid-day heat and sun, he fires five shots into the man's body for no particular reason, the first of which kills him instantly, the remaining four of which appear arbitrary, inconsequential and pointless. Propelled by an overwhelming pressure exerted upon him from within Meursault becomes responsible for the death of a human being, but it is only this – cold-hearted murder – that shakes him out of the habitual and mundane routine of life and places him face-to-face with the absurd. This obviously constitutes a crucial point of contrast with Böll's *Und sagte kein einziges Wort*, since Meursault actually does something of consequence, namely murder. Fred Bogner by way of comparison lethargically succumbs to the mundane routine of life without ever committing acts of consequence. When Meursault is put on trial after his arrest, he apathetically declares 'I did not intend to kill the Arab' and that 'it was because of the sun'.¹⁴⁰ Meursault is eventually condemned to death as much because he killed the Arab as because he was incapable of living within the strict confines of societal norms and expectations: because he doesn't mourn the death of his mother, because he smokes a cigarette and drinks coffee at her wake, because he doesn't believe in God, because he doesn't have 'those moral qualities which normal men possess'.¹⁴¹ Isolated from a human sense of order and routine, be

¹³⁸ Albert Camus, *The Stranger*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Vintage, 1954), p. 1.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

it familial, societal, judicial, ethical or religious, Camus's protagonist Meursault can be seen to constitute a true existentialist anti-hero who represents an affiliation with the benign indifference of the universe as well as its incongruities.

His 1956 novel *The Fall* (*La Chute*) can likewise be read as a discomforting, savagely satirical indictment of contemporary man. Ostensibly the novel centres on the confession of the disenchanted former lawyer Jean-Baptiste Clamence who has exiled himself from the Parisian scene and established his underground headquarters in a downtrodden bar in Amsterdam. Yet through the bitter gaze of the omniscient narrator the novel divulges a more complex agenda: to thematise the protagonist's pervasive sense of guilt, his profound moral anguish, his egotism and neuroses which border on insanity, – 'Oh, sun, beaches, and the islands in the path of the trade winds,' he explains at one point, 'youth whose memory drives one to despair!'¹⁴² – all of which serve to emphasise the profoundly fraught nature of his existence. One might suppose that Clamence's confessing to strangers in bars is not a particularly successful stratagem to help him evade personal responsibility, as he so claims, but rather the result of an impulsive need to understand his angst-ridden, fractured life.

BÖLL AND ABSURDITY

Several German critics have felt prompted to label Heinrich Böll as 'der deutsche Camus'.¹⁴³ Anyone familiar with the values underlying the works of these quite distinct writers would be quick to call attention to the marked differences between them, yet what can be located here, beyond or behind their obvious differential, is a delicate and subtle spiritual and existential affinity, an affinity that shows in Böll's and Camus's consciences as writers, in the texture of their fiction, their craftsmanship as artists, and their musings on the themes of existence and absurdity. Both Böll and Camus can be regarded as moralists. Their works are characterised by an ideal that permeates most every sentence, fictitious or expository, that they have written, and this implicit ideal is the measuring stick for their moral judgements.

¹⁴² Albert Camus, *The Fall*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), p. 144

¹⁴³ Cf. Hans Schwab-Felisch's review of *Billard um halb Zehn*, *Frankfurter Hefte*, XV (February 1960), pp. 1058-1060; Hans Egon Holthusen used the same label in a lecture on twentieth-century German literature at Yale University in January 1960. See also Theodore Ziolkowski, 'Albert Camus and Heinrich Böll', in *Modern Language Notes*, 77.3 (May 1962), pp. 282-291.

Camus's ideal is a society ruled by moral rigour and human justice, whilst Böll's is a state of conscious Christianity. These are not attitudes, of course, that are shared by Camus and Böll alone. They have particular philosophical affinities, for instance, with the moral values of Søren Kierkegaard, Léon Bloy, Jean-Paul Sartre and Emmanuel Mounier, albeit to varying degrees, as I have already outlined in the case of Böll. But the precipitation of these distinctly existentialist topoi that colour their writing is nonetheless characteristic of their attitudes towards the world and marks their works as unmistakeably unique.

The first and perhaps most obvious similarity is the mocking, tempered satire that pervades both Camus's and Böll's worlds and their portrayals of human existence. Like *La Chute*, Böll's *Der Engel schwieg* (1949/50) and also his *Und sagte kein einziges Wort* (1953) can be seen as savagely critical indictments of the desperate plight of those who found themselves adrift in the disarray of postwar Germany. Both texts underline the vacuity and absurdity of the clerical, political and economic institutions which shaped the lives of the exploited, hopeless and somehow enduring 'kleiner Mann'. In his quest for realism Böll, as a self-professed 'Realist, ohne jede Einschränkung',¹⁴⁴ seizes hold of details which prompt his readers to take note of the existential significance of particular, seemingly inconsequential moments, for instance Marie Derkum screwing the cap back on a tube of toothpaste in *Ansichten eines Clowns*, or Hans Schnitzler savouring the sweet taste of stale bread in *Der Engel schwieg*, or Fred Bogner aimlessly meandering the northern districts of his native Cologne in *Und sagte kein einziges Wort*, or lieutenant Greck observing with languid fascination an old lady selling apricots from her fruit cart on a Hungarian market square in *Wo warst du, Adam?*¹⁴⁵ In such moments Böll appears to be echoing the words of his own protagonist Hans Schnier: 'Am besten gelingt mir die Darstellung alltäglicher Absurditäten: ich beobachte, addiere diese Beobachtungen, potenziere sie und ziehe aus ihnen die Wurzel, aber mit einem anderen Faktor, als mit dem ich sie potenziert habe' [AC: 98].

¹⁴⁴ Claus Kolberg, *Literarische Werkstatt: Gespräch mit Heinrich Böll*, March 1969, cited in Jochen Schubert, *Heinrich Böll* (Paderborn: Fink, 2011), p. 57.

¹⁴⁵ Heinrich Böll, *Wo warst du Adam?* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1952).

What Böll and Camus have in common is their focus on and preoccupation with the discrepancy between existential absurdity and reality. As moralists they offer implicit solutions to the enigmas that surface in their works. What makes their novels contemporary and, crucially, existentialist is their reaction to the absurd: they both diagnose their time as an era of emptiness, apathy, emptiness and angst. Their explorations of this existential discrepancy becomes manifest in an array of characters that populate both writers' fiction. Böll's novels are a veritable catalogue of the mundane preoccupations of despondent protagonists and unsung heroes, all of whom are lacking as much as looking for ideals to lend their lives purpose, be it putting on a clown costume or perpetually rolling a rock up a hill. One might recall Böll's short story from 1948 *Der Mann mit den Messern*, whose lowly and apathetic protagonist finds his function in life in a variety show: 'Ich war der Mann, auf den man mit Messern wirft...',¹⁴⁶ he boasts in the final sentence, delighted to have found a job in which he can finally make a useful contribution. Or the main figure in Böll's *Dr. Murkes gesammeltes Schweigen*, whose recourse from days spent editing cultural lectures taped for a radio programme is to spend his evenings listening to the silence snipped out from these same recordings: 'Wenn du wüsstest, wie kostbar mir dein Schweigen ist. Abends, wenn ich müde bin, wenn ich hier sitzen muss, lass ich mir dein Schweigen ablaufen';¹⁴⁷ this short story from 1955 is laden with existentialist angst, apathy and absurdity, as the following excerpt illustrates:

Jeden Morgen, wenn er das Funkhaus betreten hatte, unterzog sich Murke einer existentiellen Turnübung: er sprang in den Paternosteraufzug, stieg aber nicht im zweiten Stockwerk, wo sein Büro lag, aus, sondern ließ sich höher tragen, am dritten, am vierten, am fünften Stockwerk vorbei, und jedes Mal befahl ihn Angst, wenn die Plattform der Aufzugskabine sich über den Flur des fünften Stockwerks hinweg erhob [...]. Murke wusste, dass seine Angst unbegründet war: Selbstverständlich würde nie etwas passieren, es konnte gar nichts passieren, und wenn etwas passierte, würde er im schlimmsten Falle

¹⁴⁶ Heinrich Böll, 'Der Mann mit den Messern', in *Heinrich Böll: Werke: Romane und Erzählungen I: 1947-1952*, ed. Bernd Balzer (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1977), pp. 102-114, p. 114.

¹⁴⁷ Heinrich Böll, *Dr. Murkes gesammeltes Schweigen und andere Satiren* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1958), p. 56.

gerade oben sein, wenn der Aufzug zum Stillstand kam, und würde eine Stunde, höchstens zwei dort oben eingesperrt sein.¹⁴⁸

This tedium and flatness is particularly reminiscent of a passage in ‘Absurd Walls’ in *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*: ‘Rising, tram, four hours in the office or factory, meal, tram, four hours of work, meal, sleep and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, according to the same rhythm – this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the “why” arises [...]’.¹⁴⁹ Are we not also reminded of the character Glum in *Haus ohne Hüter* who works faithfully in a factory but finds the greatest solace in painting the gigantic scale-map of the world on his bedroom wall?

These products of Böll’s – and indeed Camus’s – creative imagination must not be construed merely as the novelist’s quest for unconventionality – more often than not, these seemingly mundane occupations and pastimes satisfy a distinct inner need in the characters; they represent precisely what Camus refers to in his 1947 novel *La Peste* as *un idéal apparemment ridicule* that makes life tolerable. Like Böll, Camus too is concerned with the so-called ‘kleiner Mann’ who wakes every day to the same *existentielle Turnübung* whilst trying to avoid exposure to life’s inherent absurdity; but unlike in Böll’s fiction, these figures are often secondary in Camus’s works. In *La Peste*, Camus insists that contemporary heroism often characterises those least likely to be associated with it:

Yes, if men really do have to offer themselves models and examples whom they call heroes, and if there really has to be one in this story, the narrator would like to offer this insignificant and self-effacing hero who had nothing to recommend him but a little goodness in his heart and an apparently ridiculous ideal.¹⁵⁰

This ‘héros insignifiant et effacé’ is an archetype for the ‘little man’ that pervades the novels of both writers; he is the ironically named Joseph Grand, a civil servant who

¹⁴⁸ Böll, *ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁴⁹ Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 11.

¹⁵⁰ Albert Camus, *The Plague*, translated by Stuart Gilbert (New York: Knopf, 1948), p. 67.

does his part to fight the plague by rigorously keeping track of the statistical records and spends his evenings polishing up his Latin and working on his novel: a single elaborate sentence that he has been reworking and refining over the years. In the same novel Camus depicts an old man whose existence centres around his daily ritual of stepping onto his balcony and, after luring the local alley cats, spitting down on them. We also recall Camus's bed-ridden asthmatic Tarrou who, having rid his home of all clocks and timekeeping devices, ceaselessly transfers dried peas from one receptacle to another in order to count the hours, a strategy as good as any other for 'killing time'; 'He filled the other [saucepan], pea by pea', we read, 'with a single, regular and assiduous movement. In this way he found his bearings through a day measured saucepan by saucepan. "Every fifteen pans," he said, "I need a snack. It's quite simple"''.¹⁵¹

On a higher level of awareness we encounter the man who, conscious of life's absurdity, seeks his solace in metaphysical rebellion. Unlike the afore-mentioned despondent, ideal-seeking figures, these characters, which populate both Camus's and Böll's novels, strive for candidness, honesty, and non-conformism in the face of the absurd. Doctor Rieux, the narrator of *La Peste*, explains to the Jesuit priest Father Paneloux: 'We are working together for something that reunites us beyond blasphemies and prayers. That is the only important thing'.¹⁵² Paneloux puts it to Rieux that they are both working for the salvation ('salut') of man, but this is too grand a concept for Rieux: 'Salvation's much too big a word for me,' he responds, 'I don't aim so high. I'm concerned with man's health; and for me his health comes first'.¹⁵³ For Rieux, the aim of resistance is not salvation or eternal justification; absurdity, as an immanent phenomenon, has levelled out such options. Rather, the only realistic form of action, Rieux concedes, is 'fighting against creation as he found it'.¹⁵⁴ Stripped of any metaphysical meaning for his actions, the doctor revolts against nature's inherent absurdity and its imposition of a fickle and arbitrary system. Rieux's painstaking efforts to fight the plague are not grounded in any transcendent meaning, but, as he reflects, is one aimed at a more humble and immanent purpose –

¹⁵¹ Camus, *The Plague*, p. 117.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 192.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 193.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 127.

the health and wellbeing of the individual, something he ultimately cannot guarantee. Rieux is a rebel in a Camusian sense as he refuses to accept the incongruity and irrationality of life as it is. He revolts against *la peste* – that is, against the symbol of the absurd that afflicts civilisation – by endeavouring to help to alleviate human anguish. Like Sisyphus from Camus's 1942 philosophical essay, Rieux concedes that his work will never be done – the plague, whose microbes are embedded in the walls and furniture, will repeat its reign of torment and suffering – but the fulfilment lies in the effort and refusal to submissively accept any violation of man's self-worth.

The same can be said of many of Böll's protagonists. Such is Albert Muchow in *Haus ohne Hüter*, the only figure in the novel whose sympathies seem to transcend or cut through the numerous social or other barriers that divide the characters in this chronicle of post-war Germany. Albert's strength derives from his remembrance of the past; he is secure in the present because his undistorted knowledge of the past is the basis of his sure vision of the future. As Robert Conard explains, Albert is 'the embodiment of Böll's concept of a moral man';¹⁵⁵ as an act of kindness for the victims of fascism, he takes up his responsibility for the tragedy of the war. He ensures that children are taught the truth, and that adults do not attempt to pervert the course of history. He is not impaired by grief or self-pity. His moral position is akin to that of Rieux in how he considers social responsibility and action against absurdity to be achieved through confronting injustice and helping others. Yet these virtues emerge most clearly in such characters as Johanna Fäbmel from Böll's *Billard um halbzehn*. Her entire life is dedicated to opposing National Socialism. She attempts to expose the fate of the Jews who are being transported to extermination camps, she shows empathy for political victims, and she breaks with the Church which had supported the Hitler regime. When she can tolerate the political horrors no more, she is forced to withdraw into a sanatorium; a spiritual retreat, yet also a sort of *innere Emigration*. Hermetically sealed off from the external 'insanity' of the world surrounding her, she is free to express her political eccentricities. Yet she remains unreconciled with the world. Immediately upon her release, she attempts to assassinate an ex-Nazi criminal now serving as a high political official. Her shot is not simply a protest against the atrocities committed in the name of Nazism, but an

¹⁵⁵ Robert C. Conard, *Understanding*, p. 63.

existentialist uprising against the inauthenticity and absurdity of a deeply flawed and superficial society. As a seeker of truth and an unmasker of hypocrisy, Johanna Fähmel's *actions* become the epitome of metaphysical rebellion.

The theme of metaphysical rebellion also resides at the heart of Böll's *Ansichten eines Clowns*. In the novel, Hans Schnier, the son of an affluent industrialist father and socially dominating mother, emerges as the unique and endangered protagonist, artistic, erratic, at times irrational, yet fundamentally admirable in his rebelling against the superficiality of the West German *Wirtschaftswunder*. Hans Schnier is a representative existentialist Böllian hero who rejects everything his society expects him to accept. When asked by his brother 'Was bist du eigentlich für ein Mensch?', he resolutely replies, 'Ich bin ein Clown'. Hans is a seeker of truth and an unmasker of hypocrisy. As a child, his devout Protestant parents subscribed to the postwar trend of denominational tolerance and enrolled him at a Catholic school. Yet as an adult Hans, who has renounced his church affiliation, prescribes to a moral code which challenges and reverses superficial and insincere values. He remarks, 'Ich glaube, dass die Lebenden tot sind, und die Toten leben'.¹⁵⁶

The most decisive existential moment in the novel comes during one of Hans's performances. The metaphorical thread snaps and he falls badly and injures his knee. The cause of this accident is Hans's alcoholism, which he has battled since the breakdown of his relationship with Marie. Hans readily acknowledges that the perils of alcohol are catastrophic for a clown, as it results in a loss of precision, which constitutes the very basis of his work. The damaged knee denotes a moment of existentialist crisis in the novel. Having lost the grace of Marie's love, his art has also now deserted him. He is forced to cancel his tour and return to Bonn, yet he is nevertheless fully aware of his fallen condition and shows acute self-awareness. Indeed, we discover that the swollen knee has a particular metaphysical meaning for Hans. As the novel develops, we come to realise the sincerity and authenticity that characterises Hans's commitment to his art. For Hans being a clown is not a mask that one removes between performances. Even in the aftermath of his fall he finds it

¹⁵⁶ Heinrich Böll, *Ansichten eines Clowns* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1963), p. 29; subsequently abbreviated as AC.

impossible to resist the clownish behaviour that his family have always detested. When his father visits Hans's apartment, he is troubled by the ludicrous, if not comical aspect lent by his son's appearance; he is dressed 'in klatschnassen Pantoffeln und einem viel zu langen, feuerroten Bademantel' [AC: 174]. Even Hans's response elicits an air of frivolity: "“Es ist keine Schlamperei”, sagte ich, “nur eine Erscheinungsform der Entspannung”" [AC: 176]. Hans's ability to converse sensibly also has something of a meandering, clownish quality. When asked by his father if he requires more money, Hans appears distracted by other matters:

‘Sieh hier.’ Ich zog das Hosenbein hoch und zeigte ihm mein geschwollenes Knie, ich ließ die Hose wieder runter und zeigte mit dem Zeigefinger der rechten Hand auf meine linke Brust. ‘Und hier’, sagte ich.

‘Mein Gott’, sagte er, ‘Herz?’

‘Ja’, sagte ich, ‘Herz’.

‘Ich werde Drohmert anrufen und ihn bitten, dich zu empfangen. Er ist der beste Herzspezialist, den wir haben.’

‘Mißverständnis’, sagte ich, ‘ich brauche Drohmert nicht zu konsultieren.’

‘Du sagtest doch: Herz.’

‘Vielleicht hätte ich Seele, Gemüt, Inneres sagen sollen— mir schien Herz angebracht’. [AC: 180]

In his role as a clown, Hans, much like Günter Grass's Oskar Matzerath with his dwarfish stature and tin drum, is a *Sonderling* alienated from his surroundings and lives on the margins. Yet this is something he embraces wholeheartedly and does not shy away from. As a result, we can see how closely his pantomime vocation mirrors the ethical stance of rebellion and authenticity. Hans does not just become a clown, nor is clowing an incidental profession; his work arises intuitively from his plight as an eccentric outsider, a position he has consciously adopted. Much like Camus's Tarrou, or Böll's Albert Muchow and Johanna Fähmel, Hans is driven to closely observe and dramatise the myriad ills of his world. For him, caricature, both as a profession *and* way of life, provides the sole means of dealing with the absurdities and realities he perceives.

Hans's mother, Frau Schnier, by contrast belongs to that group of individuals who, in metaphysical terms, have denied their subjectivity, becoming what can be viewed in Anderschian existentialist terms as *sub-men*, or *sub-women*, who have succumbed to the 'Herdeninstinkt'.¹⁵⁷ Whether motivated through fear or ignorance, they have surrendered their interior freedom and fled into a supposedly objective order of ready-made, institutionalised values. The *herd-man*, to pick up on Andersch's coinage, is a potentially dangerous creature, however. Having denied his or her own freedom and having withdrawn into an imaginary objective order, their foremost concern becomes to try at all costs to prevent this order from descending into chaos. The *herd-man* also evokes what Simone de Beauvoir calls 'l'homme sérieux', as articulated in her 1947 *Ethics of Ambiguity* (*Pour une moral de l'ambiguïté*). De Beauvoir claims that the individual who nonetheless identifies with a given essence has succumbed to the 'spirit of seriousness,' and, like Sartre, she finds such individuals culpable their abdication of personal responsibility in a given situation. The serious man, she tells us, 'forces himself to submerge his freedom in the content which the latter accepts from society. He loses himself in the object in order to annihilate his subjectivity'. Invoking the existentialism of Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche she rails 'at the deceitful stupidity of the serious man and his universe'; Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, she continues:

is in large part a description of the serious man and his universe. The serious man gets rid of his freedom by claiming to subordinate it to values which would be unconditioned. He imagines that the accession to these values likewise permanently confers value upon himself. Shielded with 'rights,' he fulfils himself as a *being* who is capable of escaping from the stress of existence. The seriousness is not defined by the nature of the ends pursued. A frivolous lady of fashion can have this mentality of the serious as well as an engineer. There is the serious from the moment that freedom denies itself to the advantage of ends which one claims are absolute.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Alfred Andersch, *Die Kirschen der Freiheit: Ein Bericht* (Zürich: Diogenes, 1971), p. 113; also Chapter Three of this dissertation, p. 50ff.

¹⁵⁸ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, p. 46.

Frau Schnier, as a ‘frivolous lady of fashion’, reacts to every datum of experience in terms of abstract principles and acceptable categories. Hans reiterates that his mother is not at all malicious, but merely ‘auf eine unbegreifliche Weise dumm’. For Hans, however, idiocy is both a complicated and important phenomenon, one that is indicative of a mode of existence in stark contrast to his own. Frau Schnier has constructed for herself an illusory, padded-wall realm of being which has nothing to do with reality that can be perceived through uninhibited experience. It is not altogether a question of hypocrisy. She truly cannot fathom, for instance, the tragic irony of her inane repetition of the phrase ‘die heilige deutsche Erde’ [AC: 24]. Nor can she comprehend that no human beings correspond to her mental image of ‘die jüdischen Yankees’, who should be expelled from her sacred homeland [AC: 24]. Frau Schnier has engrossed herself in a world of distorted mental images in a windowless attic, and her tragedy is that she is consequently no longer capable of the most basic human reactions: She is quite prepared to sacrifice even her children to the phantoms that permeate her existence. Redolent in some respects of the identity crisis experienced by Anatol Stiller/Jim White,¹⁵⁹ the objective content of this illusory world which is being defended is fundamentally irrelevant: when one system or order has lost its efficacy as a mask, it is simply discarded and exchanged for another. Frau Schnier can thus be seen readily to oscillate between Nazism and democracy: ‘Meine Mutter ist inzwischen schon seit Jahren Präsidentin des Zentralkomitees der Gesellschaften zur Versöhnung rassischer Gegensätze’ [AC: 30], Hans says of her, highlighting her thoroughly hypocritical and opportunistic attitude considering the anti-Semitic sentiments she uttered in a previous era. Moreover, it is made sufficiently clear that the differences between the political parties represented by the characters in the novel are negligible. Von Severn, for instance, is accorded celebrity status within the circle of progressive Catholics because he is both Catholic and a member of the SPD: ‘es [wurde] gesagt, dass er “zwar eben konservativ sei, aber der SPD nahestehende” [...] Er war langweilig und schien fest entschlossen, sich auf der sensationellen Tatsache, Konvertit *und* SPD-Mitglied zu sein, endgültig auszuruhen’ [AC: 93]. The sensation itself seems to be an acceptable substitute for any serious political or conceptual reflection. He has identified himself with this contradictory mask – ‘von Severn war mir weder das eine

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Max Frisch, *Stiller* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1954); also Chapter Two of this dissertation

noch das andere' [AC: 93] – but is delighted to be recognised in this way by others. In essence, these characters appear to be playing a game. It is as if the participants at a masked ball were to act out their assumed roles in earnest, which gives the novel's title, *Ansichten eines Clowns*, its particular poignancy; in the end, Hans is perhaps the only one not wearing a mask. Under such circumstances illusions are taken for reality and the concrete truths of existence are either denied or twisted, which again evokes the fraudulent existence and identity crisis of Frisch's Anatol Stiller.

Frau Schnier's hopeless addiction to 'significance', albeit in her case fundamentally farcical and arbitrary categories, also accounts for her failure to emotionally connect with her son. Hans is a clown by profession, yet his mother is unable to locate the designation 'clown' on her list of tolerable human conditions; she regards his choice simply as 'berufliches Pech' [AC: 36]. Since her inventory of adequate possibilities constitutes in her mind the very limits of being itself, Hans, as far as Frau Schnier is concerned, has lost his ontological status as a human being. This is perhaps most evident in her extraordinary recovery from the shock of Hans's brother Leo's conversion to Catholicism; the shock is only endurable because Leo is well on his way to becoming 'ein führender Theologe', thus satisfying her rigid, unyielding classifications of her fellow human beings. Although the reader has no reason to doubt the integrity of Leo, Frau Schnier's permissible categories are by no means a guarantee of the integrity of those who fit into them. She is so blinded by her own clichés that the genuine artistic calling of her son is equalled only by her deplorable veneration for the phony and hypocritical figure of Schnitzler. She would be prepared for reconciliation if only Hans would consent to be born again into her category of 'der ringende Künstler', which Hans for the sake of his own self-respect is unwilling to do. He is fighting to retain his authenticity in a world of inauthentic fellow beings.

On only one occasion, as far as the reader is told, does Hans detect a morsel of humanity in his mother, when he witnesses her violate her own fixed principles: disregarding her superficialities, her 'Schlankheitsfimmel' and fixation with various diet theories [AC: 157], Frau Schnier sneaks down into the cellar and ravenously eats a thick slice of ham; Hans tells us

wie sie im Keller heimlich in ihre Vorratskammer ging, sich eine dicke Scheibe Schinken abschnitt und sie unten aß, stehend, mit den Fingern, hastig, es sah nicht einmal widerwärtig aus, nur überraschend, und ich war eher gerührt als entsetzt. [AC: 225]

Hans is not angry with her; for in this instant the natural human urge to satisfy hunger triumphs over abstract principles. This is a precious moment for Hans, a treasurable secret worth carrying to the grave, and he promises himself he will never betray it. It constitutes one of the most authentic moments in Hans's experience of his mother.

* * *

A survey of recent developments in Böll scholarship reveals that, for all the obvious advances which new publications have provided, the general trend remains steadfastly to approach Heinrich Böll primarily as a moral voice, a national conscience, and a prized literary chronicler of West Germany, whose experience of the Second World War and its aftermath constitute the dominant thematic *Ausgangspunkt*. As a result, the attention of the bulk of the secondary literature, including the above-referenced works by Theodore Ziolkowski, Joachim Bernhard, Jochen Vogt, Robert C. Conard, Bernhard Sowinski, Werner Bellmann, Frank Finlay, and Bernd Balzer, to name a representative selection, generally tends to focus on the social, humanistic, religious, aesthetic and intertextual nature of Böll's fictional works, which are, generally speaking, accorded praise for the ethical commitment which they express. To this extent, Böll's literary legacy has come to be regarded as the epitome of *Gesinnungsliteratur*. The appraisal of such imaginative literature on artistic grounds is dominated by a widely-held complementary negative view that, his moral stature notwithstanding, Böll was an unexceptional author, whose works are thematically limited and repetitive, overly sentimental, thus undermining their socio-critical intent, and dualistic in their naive depiction of a world that is either good or evil. There is, therefore, in the eyes of many a critic, much in Böll's writing that militates against the reputation it has achieved across the last five decades.

With this in mind, it has been the principal aim of this study to offer a reappraisal mostly of Böll's early and mid-period fiction by drawing attention to its palpable existentialist dimensions, a topic that has received only cursory attention in the last fifty years of scholarship. As I related earlier, some notable publications in this area exist, including Theodore Ziolkowski's essay 'Albert Camus and Heinrich Böll', Hans van Stralen's *Choices and Conflicts: Essays on Literature and Existentialism*, Beate Schnepf's 'Die Aufgabe des Schriftstellers: Bölls künstlerisches Selbstverständnis im Spiegel unbekannter Zeugnisse', and Gerhard Sauder's 'Heinrich Bölls Léon-Bloy-Lektüre: Ursprünge eines radikalen Katholizismus'. Yet whilst each of these studies evidently recognises the potential for an existentialist reading of Böll's fictional oeuvre, the results are often either too narrow in scope, or too cursory in their analysis.

In an attempt to make amends for these deficits in the existing secondary literature, this study argues the case for a re-examination of Böll's existentialist philosophical and aesthetic thinking. Part one of this chapter centres on the theistic existentialist undertones evident in Böll's early post-war writing. *Der Engel schwieg* and *Und sagte kein einziges Wort* reinforce the author's early concern for theistic existentialism, in particular the thinking of Léon Bloy and Søren Kierkegaard and their meditations on the theme of metaphysical suffering as a path to transcendence. Kierkegaard never hesitates to assert, pseudonymously or not, that our salvation rests in God alone. In his study on Léon Bloy, Pschera expands on this existentialist concept as follows: 'der Schmerz ist demnach nicht nur die Wiege der christlichen Tugenden, sondern er durchdringt die gesamte Existenz eines Menschen. Der Schmerz bestimmt den Menschen als das, was er ist'.¹⁶⁰ This notion has remarkable resonance in Böll's early post-war fiction. The juxtaposition of Kierkegaardian doctrine, Bloy's novels and Böll's *Der Engel schwieg* and *Und sagte kein einziges Wort* thus reveals how these thinkers were united in what they saw as the ennobling, life-affirming and ultimately liberating nature of poverty; suffering may indeed be a wretched experience, but it is nonetheless, they would claim, an ennobling one. It serves to define the individual as who he is. Whilst Nietzsche saw *Leiden* and *Mitleiden* as, in Pschera's words, 'Kennzeichen des Untergangs' and 'Merkmale der

¹⁶⁰ Pschera, *Léon Bloy*, p. 100.

décadence',¹⁶¹ Kierkegaard, Bloy and Böll each look upon these painful and degrading experiences as a stepping stone to overcoming inauthenticity, tedium and the monotony of human existence. Man is propelled by suffering to re-examine his or her life, achievements, and aspirations; Kierkegaard articulates this metaphysical notion as follows:

Yes, if my suffering, my weakness were not the basis for my intellectual activity, I would of course make another attempt to deal with it quite simply as a medical matter. After all, if one's life is absolutely without significance anyway, it just isn't right to suffer as I suffer and simply do nothing. But here is the secret: The significance of my life corresponds exactly to my suffering.¹⁶²

The second part of this chapter surveys some of Böll's later writings, and plots the later development of his existentialist thinking. Specifically, I contend, the 1950s and 1960s saw Böll retreat from his former existentialist influences and redirect his attention towards the at times conflicting metaphysical positions of Jean-Paul Sartre and Emmanuel Mounier.

Böll's notion of literary commitment, as it comes into fruition in his 'Bekenntnis zur Trümmerliteratur', was spawned, much like Sartre's 'littérature engagée', from the social, political, and cultural upheaval of his ravaged, war-ridden homeland. Böll came to sympathise with Sartre's insistence that individual acts and gestures are laden with individual responsibility and commitment. The writers are thus aesthetically as well as politically united in their belief that the role of the writer is unique in that he is obliged to take *action* and intervene politically in the public sphere in order to confront the deeper reality of a situation. Emmanuel Mounier was similarly concerned with the notions of literary engagement and 'action'; for him, engagement entailed a sense of artistic duty and crucially also a need to move away from capitalist notions towards a more socialist and specifically Christian commonwealth. From Mounier's Christian viewpoint, individual freedom should lead to an opening out towards others and a concern for the general freedom of the

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁶² Søren Kierkegaard's *Journals and Papers*, vol. 1, p. 233.

other, a chief tenet also in Böll's Christian treatment of freedom. For both Böll and Mounier, freedom *is* the encountering of that which is other to me, and this should unite men with other men, be they strangers or outcasts who have been marginalised by a hostile society. As we saw, these themes resonate throughout many of Böll's fictional works, including *Der Engel schwieg*, *Und sagte kein einziges Wort*, *Ansichten eines Clowns*, and *Der Mann mit den Messern*.

The principal difference separating Sartre and Mounier's aesthetic thinking, namely Mounier's notion of engagement as *témoignage*, or bearing witness, in contrast to Sartre's engagement as action and a means to effect concrete temporal success, is made the focus of Böll's 1959 novel *Billard um halb zehn*. Böll seeks here to correlate both Sartre's and Mounier's perspectives by studying the inevitable consequences that arise in situations when individuals come to believe that societal solutions to injustice no longer exist. As the novel moves from past to present, from stasis to activity, it reveals how the Fähmels each confront their personal *Grenzsituation* in different ways and shows how they have the choice to break out of their shell of memory, thereby making themselves fully liberated subjects of history (*Büffel*), or remain inactive observers who passively cling to an inauthentic existence in the usually unfulfilled hope of change (*Lämmer*).

Yet if any existentialist thinker can function as an interpretative foil against which to read and interpret Böll's later writing, it would have to be Albert Camus; it is he who constitutes the final focus of this chapter. At the heart of Böll's works are, as I hope to have established, the themes of suffering, poverty, affluence, society's enduring 'underdogs', despondent ideal-seeking protagonists, unsung heroes, and the inconsequential *Augenblicke* that make up man's existence; all of these themes are the very leitmotifs that inform and colour the 'existentialist' fiction of Albert Camus. What links Camus's *La Chute* and *L'Etranger*, specifically with Böll's 1963 work *Ansichten eines Clowns* is their satirising the plight of all those who found themselves adrift in the spiritual and economic calamity that, for Böll, was *Wirtschaftswunder* West Germany. Each of these texts underlines the vacuity and absurdity of the clerical, political and economic institutions which shaped the lives of the exploited, hopeless and somehow enduring 'kleiner Mann'. In his quest for realism the so-called 'deutscher Camus' imprints on the mind of his readers

seemingly insignificant moments which serve to indicate the meaningless pantomime of human existence. Whilst some 'héros insignifiant et effacé' remain confined to their world of tedium, flatness and inauthenticity, Camus and Böll champion the cause of the individual who seeks solace in existential rebellion, prime instances being Hans Schnier and Katharina Blum. Unlike such despondent figures as Fred Bogner, these individuals strive for candidness, honesty and non-conformism in the face of the absurd, seeking by inference yet unwittingly to define themselves in accordance with an existentialist agenda.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Man's feeling of homelessness, of alienation has been intensified in the midst of a bureaucratized, impersonal mass society. He has come to feel himself an outsider, even within his own human society. He is trebly alienated; a stranger to God, to nature, and to the gigantic social apparatus that supplies his material wants.¹

The terms 'homelessness' and 'alienation' characterise and sum up perhaps better than any other the thinking that lies behind the philosophy and worldview of existentialism. With these terms William Barrett seeks not just to size up the existentialist quandary, but also what marks out both the specific contemporaneity and timelessness of existentialist themes. Existentialism arose, one could say, when European philosophers and theologians began to see 'man' as losing control of his fate, when they experienced the self as becoming unstable, vacillating and questionable, when personal identity was felt as turning impersonal, when the individual started fading into mass society. What renders existentialism especially *au courant* as a subject of inquiry as well as a mode of reflection is less its concern with existence in general than its particular contention that thinking about human existence, as something distinctively temporal and tentative, constantly raises questions about the individual in the world, questions indeed to which the deliberative and speculative repertoires of ancient thought and classical philosophy were seen as no longer giving satisfactory answers, or answers that no longer seemed to apply. The existentialist themes around which these questions agglutinated most were self, angst, death, responsibility, *Grenzsituation*, suffering and authenticity. These key themes were not just abstract philosophical or theological concepts, hypothetical notions put into service as the basis for theoretical reflection; rather, for a whole generation – the mid-twentieth-century cohort of intellectuals who had just come through the distressing experience of violence,

¹ William Barrett, *Irrational Man*, pp. 35-6.

oppression and suffering generated by World War Two and Nazi tyranny – they were the concrete leitmotifs of practical lived experience. It is for obvious reasons therefore that these key themes of existentialist philosophy and theology were to strike such a chord with postwar European writers.

The aim of this study has been to explore not the literary writings of the French existentialists. Instead the focus has been on three of their German-language contemporaries – the Swiss writer Max Frisch and the German writers Alfred Andersch and Heinrich Böll – who never engaged in *explicit* philosophical or theological existentialist reflection as such, but whose novels have given *implicit* literary formulation to the range of existentialist concerns encapsulated by the above-mentioned philosophical and theological key words self, angst, responsibility, *Grenzsituation*, suffering and authenticity. In doing so, this investigation has sought to underscore not just the palpable impact of existentialism on German-language writers at a critical juncture of German and European history, namely the aftermath of the Second World War, but also to investigate how existentialist thought trickled down, as it were, into society at large, allowing people at that time, following the upheavals of war and totalitarianism, to give expression to their lived problems and predicaments.

Our study began with an investigation of Max Frisch's 1954 work *Stiller*, a novel which reveals how existentialist concerns about the nature of the self, authenticity and human freedom constitute the very essence of the Swiss writer's literary repertoire. The world portrayed in Frisch's novel is unquestionably that of existentialist philosophy, in which meaning is dubious, freedom is transient and identities are inconsistent, wavering between authenticity and inauthenticity. Stiller/White's inauthentic existence is depicted in his obsession with images, symbolic of the individual's mental imprisonment within a defined social role. His world is characterised as an attempt at physical and psychological *Selbstflucht*, and at the centre of his marriage to Julika is a perpetual experiencing of ontological guilt. These motifs are reminiscent of the themes of identity denial and nonconformity with one's 'true' identity which lie at the heart of both Frisch's *Stiller* and the novels of Sartre. Moreover, the concepts of the realisation of freedom by way of 'choosing oneself' and the overcoming of existential angst by means of a

‘leap of faith’, as first deliberated by Kierkegaard, are explored by Frisch in the final sections of the novel. Yet the question as to whether Frisch’s incorporation of Kierkegaardian themes lends the novel *Stiller* a missionary purpose remains a topic of scholarly discussion. The novel’s intentional open-endedness and lack of religious definitiveness prompt one to question whether Frisch also intended to depict Christian spirituality as a response to existentialist anguish. The novel’s epigraph by Kierkegaard notwithstanding, one must ask whether the thematic correspondences are direct allusions to the Danish philosopher, or whether it is only a case of Frisch engaging with issues that are central for existentialist philosophy from Fichte to Heidegger and Sartre. Irrespective of pedigree, the degree to which Frisch revisits and incorporates existentialist references and concerns in his postwar novels have considerable bearing on any interpretation of his work.

Alfred Andersch underlays his novel *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* with a heterogeneous blend of philosophical positions which amalgamate religious and nonreligious existentialist concerns into a unique albeit not always consistent metaphysical standpoint. Andersch’s concern for Sartrean existentialism is unarguable, as are his political engagement in the *résistance* and his fascination with Sartre’s literary theory. The characteristically Sartrean concepts of *littérature engagée*, the flight into freedom, situational freedom in the form of ‘Augenblick,’ and bad faith similarly constitute a key existential backdrop against which to read and interpret Andersch’s 1952 novel. Yet despite the prevalence of Sartrean concepts in Andersch’s literary work, they appear in a new context. His re-framing of the *Freiheitsbegriff* by way of his belief in ‘eine von Gott verliehene existentielle Freiheit’,² as a case in point, not only supports the above contention, but simultaneously signals an *Annäherung an Christentum* and, by inference, Andersch’s taking a counter-position to Sartrean atheism. Drawing on Andersch’s *Gottesverständnis*, one detects behind *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* a programmatic spiritual examination of the themes of fate and causality, themes which form the very core of the French and English reformist Catholic works of François Mauriac, Emmanuel Mounier, Jacques Maritain and Graham Greene. These religious influences combine with Kierkegaard’s concept of angst, as well as his notion of the

² Alfred Andersch, *Nihilismus oder Moralität*, p. 9.

aesthetic and the ethical stages of existence, to form a theistic existentialist backdrop against which to interpret the characters populating Andersch's literary oeuvre. In particular Kierkegaard's consideration of the distinctive existential stages of human life, as explained for example in *Either/Or*, serves as an illuminating context for the interpretation of the characters' actions and their decisions in Andersch's thoroughly existentialist prose.

The overarching aim of my investigation of Heinrich Böll's posthumously published *Der Engel schwieg* was to re-evaluate the existentialist philosophical and aesthetic thinking of the so-called *Gewissen der deutschen Nation*. *Der Engel schwieg* vividly illustrates the author's early concern for theistic existentialism, especially as it manifests itself in the thinking of Léon Bloy and Søren Kierkegaard and their meditations on the theme of metaphysical suffering as a route to transcendence. A comparison of their writings uncovers how Kierkegaard, Bloy and Böll each look upon painful and degrading experiences as a stepping stone to overcoming what is felt to be the inauthenticity, tedium and monotony of human existence. Notably, however, theistic existentialism is not the only existentialist foil against which to read and interpret Böll's literary oeuvre. One can observe a maturation of Böll's philosophical stance over the years that comes to the fore especially in his 1959 novel *Billard um halb zehn*, which explores the relevance of the Sartrean concept of 'engagement' as well as Mounier's notion of engagement as *témoignage* for a critique of recent and contemporary German history. In the novel, Böll can be seen to correlate both Sartre's and Mounier's perspectives by studying the inevitable effects that arise in situations when individuals come to believe that societal solutions to injustice no longer exist. No less central to Böll's fiction than Sartre's existentialism is the philosophy of Albert Camus, for whom the themes of suffering, poverty, affluence, society's enduring 'underdogs', despondent ideal-seeking protagonists, unsung heroes, and the inconsequential *Augenblicke* that make up man's existence constitute pivotal existentialist leitmotifs, leitmotifs that Böll in his works adopts and adapts.

My investigation of the aforementioned novels by these three German-language writers has resulted in three overarching conclusions. The first is that the movement of existentialism can and should be approached as *both* a philosophical and literary

phenomenon. This study has sought to examine the idea of existentialism *as* literature, outlining an image of existentialism as it developed also in literary rather than purely philosophical terms. The works of literature by Max Frisch, Alfred Andersch and Heinrich Böll, but particularly their novels that surfaced in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, offer a crucial means of expression for and dissemination of existentialist thought. What my analyses of select German-language novels have sought to highlight is existentialist literature's 'branching out' from the stem of the *arbre existentialiste*, in particular through the novels' engagement with the themes of freedom, authenticity, *Grenzsituation*, angst and suffering, which manifest themselves also, albeit in diverse ways and to varying degrees, in Sartre's play *Huis Clos* and the prose text *Les jeux sont faits*, Camus's *La Chute*, *La Peste* and *L'Etranger*, Bloy's *Le Désespéré* and *La Femme Pauvre*, Mauriac's *Thérèse Desqueyroux*, as well as Greene's *The Power and the Glory*. What this diffusion reveals is existentialism's broad appeal and applicability as a literary phenomenon. Whilst one can certainly approach existentialism through the lens of the abstract philosophical treatises and essays alone that first incited the movement, such as those by Kierkegaard or Heidegger, which continue to serve as the core philosophical pronouncements, one can glean more concrete insight into existentialism's practical concerns from the literary works of Camus, Bloy, Mauriac and Greene, as well as on the German-language side Frisch, Andersch and Böll, among others, which – as I hope to have shown through my analyses – constitute a parallel albeit much less systematic and much less theoretical mode of articulation and communication.

The second conclusion concerns the heterogeneous blends, or strands and strains, of existentialist thinking that have materialised as part of my study of these three authors. My findings have at times been both surprising and unexpected; close analysis of Böll's *Der Engel schwieg*, as a case in point, uncovers an unusual metaphysical standpoint in this early work in that it merges theistic and atheistic existentialist perspectives while vacillating between Kierkegaardian beliefs on suffering and transcendence on the one hand and Camusean deliberations on absurdity and metaphysical rebellion on the other. To categorise Böll's novel as a work of purely Catholic literature would thus be a hasty and overly prescriptive assessment, for what resides beneath the surface of Böll's novel fragment are an

array of complex and, at times, conflicting existentialist positions. Andersch's *Die Kirschen der Freiheit* similarly reveals an awareness of and interest in competing branches of the *arbre existentialiste*. Irrefutably enthralled by modernism and the innovative and experimental forms of Sartre's atheistic existentialism, Andersch shows himself in his novel gradually deviating from Sartrean doctrine in favour of a programmatic exploration of such quintessentially theistic existentialist themes as fate, causality and salvation. Frisch's *Stiller*, whilst coloured by the atheistic philosophical positions of Sartre and Heidegger, likewise probes the question of the restorative powers of religious faith, particularly regarding the inherent contradiction involved in the idea of God. Ultimately, although religious faith is unable to 'save' Stiller from his existentialist despair, the Swiss writer explores the theistic notions of the attainment of freedom by way of 'choosing oneself' and the triumphing over existential angst by means of a 'leap of faith', as first reconnoitred by Kierkegaard in significant depth especially in the final sections of the novel.

Of course, it was never the intention of this study prescriptively to label Frisch, Andersch or Böll as theistic or atheistic existentialists. What my findings do reveal, however, is that they all engage with the multiple and often even conflicting branches of the *arbre existentialist* in creative ways to develop novel insights into and critical engagement with both the theistic and atheistic dimensions of existentialist thought. What is common and central to the literary fiction of Frisch, Andersch and Böll as well as the existentialist writings of Sartre, Camus, Jaspers, Heidegger and Kierkegaard, among others, is how the embracing and rejection of religious faith is continuously recast in relation to the human individual and the problems brought about by his, as Heidegger has put it, being cast or thrown into the world. My study of the three German-language writers ultimately serves to underscore the depth to which existentialist concerns and ideas had infiltrated post-1945 German-language literature by the late 1940s and 1950s even where the writers themselves shied away from publically identifying with existentialism as either a literary or philosophical movement.

Finally, what also emerges from my study of these literary texts is the continuing relevance of this philosophical movement which grapples in such fundamental ways with the concrete aporias and threshold situations of human existence then as today.

What makes existentialism as an approach of inquiry and reflection so apposite is less its concern with existence in general than its claim that thinking existentially about *human* existence leads us to pose questions that reach beyond the conceptual repertoire of classical philosophy. As I write this in the twenty-first century, the human individual continues to be barraged with ever new existential conundrums. Man may have mastered his environment, transformed planet Earth, graced the surface of the Moon and multiplied the world's population, yet the more he has achieved the more he seems to have spawned, as Barrett observes, a 'desolating sense of rootlessness, vacuity, and a lack of concrete feeling',³ all of which can thrust man back into spells of dizzying anxiety. Existentialist quandaries continue to arise, for instance, from the increased consumption of new media in modern society and the consumer's perpetual quest for experiences of individuality and authenticity, or from the sense that the acceleration of life leaves us spiritually denuded – hence religion's resurgence. Online environments, including social networking sites such as Facebook, online brand communities, video sites such as YouTube, and virtual worlds such as Second Life, constitute a uniquely modern opportunity for identity formation; they are mediators of an increased freedom of expression. Yet at the same time they represent sources of perplexing isolation and alienation for the modern individual. In the aftermath of 9/11 in 2001, the London Bombings of July 2005, the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre of January 2015 and most recently the Paris terrorist attacks of November 2015, mass media coverage on the so-called war on terror has imposed, at times to an overwhelming degree, the binary oppositions of good/evil, right/wrong, East/West and us/them. Supported by a wide range of visual, audible and written material, these facile yet dangerous binaries, all of which evoke the intrinsic difference and potential malevolence of the 'other', seem the more palatable and easy to digest, the more people feel isolated and withdrawn by dint of their hypertrophied submersion in the cyber world of the new media.⁴ Regardless of era, time, space or place, existentialism tells us, the individual must remain the key locus of human curiosity and can be understood neither as a substance with fixed properties, nor as a subject interacting unchangeably with a world of objects. It is

³ Barrett, *ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴ James Gilmore and Joseph Pine discuss the commercialisation and virtualisation of the individual in their 2007 publication *Authenticity: What consumers really want* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2007), in which they describe the everyday life of the individual as becoming saturated with 'the toxic levels of inauthenticity [that] we are forced to breathe', p. 43.

precisely the primacy of individual existence, lived experience and human freedom, all of which vacillate from generation to generation, that lends and will continue to lend existentialism its particular weight and on-going contemporaneity, particularly in a world in which, according to Barrett, ‘modern man seems ever further from understanding himself than when he first began to question his own identity’.⁵

It is in this vein perhaps that the reading of existentialist literature, such as the novels by Frisch, Andersch and Böll analysed here, takes on a contemporary function: it reminds us of the continuing relevance and centrality of existentialism’s key themes and of the – not yet answered – questions about angst, death, responsibility, freedom, suffering, authenticity, and more, that life continually puts to us, then as now.

⁵ Barrett, *ibid.*, p. 23.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Primary Texts

– ANDERSCH, Alfred, 'andererseits', in *empört euch der himmel ist blau: Gedichte und Nachdichtungen 1946-1977* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1977)

_____, 'Auf der Suche nach dem englischen Roman', in *Das Alfred Andersch Lesebuch*, ed. Gerd Haffmans (Zurich: Diogenes, 1979), pp. 168-174

_____, 'Aufbruch zum Absoluten', *Süddeutscher Rundfunk*, 23 December 1955

_____, 'Notwendige Aussage zum Nürnberger Prozess', *Der Ruf* 1 (August 1946); reprinted in *Der Ruf: Eine deutsche Nachkriegszeitsschrift*, ed. Hans Schwab-Felisch (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1962), pp. 26-29

_____, 'Das junge Europa formt sein Gesicht', *Der Ruf* 1 (August 1946)

_____, 'Der Seesack: Aus einer Autobiographie', in *Das Alfred Andersch Lesebuch*, ed. Gerd Haffmans (Zurich: Diogenes, 1979), pp. 83-101

_____, *Deutsche Literatur in der Entscheidung: Ein Beitrag zur Analyse der literarischen Situation* (Karlsruhe: Volk und Zeit, 1948)

_____, 'Die Existenz und die objektiven Werte: Eine Entgegnung', *Die Neue Zeitung*, 15 August 1947, p. 3

_____, *Die Kirschen der Freiheit: Ein Bericht* (Zürich: Diogenes, 1971)

_____, 'Die Leidenschaft der Unterscheidung', *Der Ruf* 1 (October 1946)

_____, *Die Rote* (Olten/Freiburg: Walter, 1960)

_____, 'Eine Konferenz des jungen Europa', *Der Ruf* 6 (November 1946)

_____, (ed.), *Europäische Avantgarde* (Frankfurt a/M: Frankfurter Hefte, 1949), p. 7

_____, 'Jean Anouilh's Antigone: Ein Drama der Jugend', *Der Ruf* 2 (September 1946), p. 13

_____, 'Léon Bloy vor den Türen', *FAZ*, 31 January 1950

_____, 'Nihilismus oder Moralität', in *Horizont* 13.7 (July 1948)

_____, 'Öffentlicher Brief an einen sowjetischen Schriftsteller, das Überholte betreffend', in *Öffentlicher Brief an einen sowjetischen Schriftsteller* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1977), pp. 195-213

_____, 'Profaner Einwand' (on Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*), *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 5 February 1949

_____, *Sansibar oder Der letzte Grund* (Olten/Freiburg: Walter, 1957)

_____, 'Thomas Mann als Politiker', in *Die Blindheit des Kunstwerks und andere Aufsätze* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1979), pp. 9-27

_____, *Winterspelt* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1974)

- BÖLL, Heinrich, *Ansichten eines Clowns* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1963)
- _____, 'Bekenntnis zur Trümmerliteratur', in *Das Heinrich Böll Lesebuch*, ed. Viktor Böll (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1982), pp. 96-100
- _____, *Billard um halbzehn* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1959)
- _____, *Brief an einen jungen Katholiken* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1961)
- _____, 'Bücher verändern die Welt: der Streit um die engagierte Literatur ist müßig', in *Heinrich Böll: Werke: Kölner Ausgabe*, vol. 12, ed. Árpád Bernáth (Cologne/Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2002), pp. 34-36
- _____, *Das Vermächtnis: Erzählung* (Bornheim-Merten: Lamuv, 1982)
- _____, *Der Engel schwieg* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1992)
- _____, *Der Geschmack des Brotes* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1954)

- _____, 'Der Mann mit den Messern', in *Heinrich Böll: Werke: Romane und Erzählungen 1: 1947-1952*, ed. Bernd Balzer (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1977), pp. 102-114
- _____, 'Die Stimme Wolfgang Borcherts', in *Werke: Essayistische Schriften und Reden 1952-1963* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1979), pp. 161-165
- _____, *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum oder Wie Gewalt entstehen und wohin sie führen kann* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1974)
- _____, *Dr. Murkes gesammeltes Schweigen und andere Satiren* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1958)
- _____, 'Eine deutsche Erinnerung: Interview mit René Wintzen: October 1976', in *Heinrich Böll: Werke: Interviews I: 1961-1978*, ed. Bernd Balzer (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1977), pp. 504-665
- _____, 'Frankfurter Vorlesungen' in *Heimat und keine: Schriften und Reden, 1964-1968* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1985), pp. 30-88
- _____, *Haus ohne Hüter* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1954)
- _____, *Heinrich Böll 1917-1985: Zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Bernd Balzer (Berlin: Lang, 1992)
- _____, *Irishes Tagebuch* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2007)
- _____, 'Kunst und Religion', in *Heinrich Böll: Zur Verteidigung der Waschküchen: Schriften und Reden: 1952-1959* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1985), pp. 314-318
- _____, 'Nachwort', in *Die Fähigkeit zu trauern. Schriften und Reden 1983-1985* (Bornheim-Merten, 1986), pp. 287-300
- _____, *Und sagte kein einziges Wort* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1953)
- _____, *Was soll aus dem Jungen bloß werden? Oder: Irgendwas mit Büchern* (Bornheim-Merten: Lamuv, 1981)
- _____, *Werke: Essayistische Schriften und Reden*, vol. 2, 1964-1972, ed. Bernd Balzer (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1978)
- _____, *Wo warst du Adam?* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1952)

_____, 'Zweite Wuppertaler Rede', in *Heinrich Böll: Aufsätze, Kritiken, Reden* (Cologne/Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1967), pp. 483-487

– FRISCH, Max, *Die Schwierigen oder j'adore ce qui me brûle* (Zurich: Atlantis, 1957)

_____, 'Emigranten: Rede zur Verleihung des Georg-Büchner-Preises', in *Gesammelte Werke in zeitlicher Folge*, vol. 4, ed. Hans Mayer (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1976), pp. 229-244

_____, *Homo Faber* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1957)

_____, 'Konfrontation mit Julika: Aus dem Roman "Stiller, Aufzeichnungen im Gefängnis"', in *Materialien zu Max Frisch Stiller*, vol. 1, ed. Walter Schmitz (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1978), pp. 35-36

_____, *Mein Name sei Gantenbein* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1964)

_____, *Tagebuch 1946-1949* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1950)

_____, *Tagebuch 1966-1971* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1972)

_____, *Stiller* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1954)

II. Critical Studies and Reference Works

– ADAMS, Robert Merrihew, 'Introduction', in *Kant: Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: And Other Writings*, ed. Allen Wood & George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. vii-xxxii

– ADORNO, Theodor W., *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus einem beschädigten Leben*, vol. 4 (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1980)

_____, *Kierkegaard: Konstruktion des Ästhetischen* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1962)

_____, 'Keine Würdigung', in *In Sachen Böll: Ansichten und Einsichten*, ed. by Marcel Reich-Ranicki (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1968), pp. 7-15

– AMERY, Carl, *Die Kapitulation oder Deutscher Katholizismus heute* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1963)

- AQUINAS, Thomas, ‘Questiones Disputatae de Veritate’, q. 24, art. 2, in *Truth*, trans. Robert W. Mulligan, James V. McGlynn & Robert W. Schmidt (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954)
- _____, ‘Summa Theologiæ I, qu. 105, art. 4’, in *Aquinas: Selected Political Writings*, ed. A. Passerin d’Entreves (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959), pp. 149-151
- ARENDT, Hannah, ‘Was ist Existenzphilosophie?’, in *Hannah Arendt: Sechs Essays* (Heidelberg: Schneider, 1948), pp. 48-80
- _____, ‘French Existentialism’, in *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken, 1994), pp. 188-194
- _____, ‘Concern with Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought’, in *ibid.*, pp. 428-447
- ARNOLD, Heinz Ludwig, *Die drei Sprünge der westdeutschen Literatur: Eine Erinnerung* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1993)
- AYER, A. J., ‘Novelist-Philosophers: V— Jean-Paul Sartre,’ in *Horizon* 12.67 (1945), pp. 12-26
- BÄNZINGER, Hans, *Frisch und Dürrenmatt: Materialien und Kommentare* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1987)
- BALLE, Martin, *Sich selbst geschrieben: Literatur als Psychoanalyse* (Munich: Iudicium, 1994)
- BALZER, Bernd, *Das literarische Werk Heinrich Bölls. Einführung und Kommentare* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1997)
- BARNES, Hazel E., *The Literature of Possibility: A Study in Humanistic Existentialism* (London: Tavistock, 1961)
- BARNES, Wesley, *The Philosophy and Literature of Existentialism* (New York: Barren’s Educational Series, 1968)
- BARRETT, William, *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy* (New York: Anchor Books, 1962)
- _____, ‘Talent and Career of Jean-Paul Sartre,’ in *Partisan Review* 13.2 (Spring 1946), pp. 237-246
- BECK, Gunnar, *Fichte and Kant on Freedom, Rights, and Law* (Lanham, MD.: Lexington Books, 2008)

- BEISER, Frederick, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism: The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992)
- _____, ‘Introduction,’ in *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
- _____, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987)
- BELLMANN, Werner, *Das Werk Heinrich Bölls. Bibliographie mit Studien zum Frühwerk* (Opladen: Westdeutscher, 1995)
- BENGTSOON, Jan Olof, ‘Idealism and the Pantheistic Revolution: The “Big Picture” and Why it is Needed’, in *Anglo-American Idealism: Thinkers and Ideas*, ed. James Connelly & Stamatoula Panagakou (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 107-131
- BENNETT, Michael Y., *Reassessing the Theatre of the Absurd: Camus, Beckett, Ionesco, Genet and Pinter* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)
- BERKOUWER, Gerrit Cornelius, *Studies in Dogmatics: General Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955)
- BERNHARD, Hans Joachim, *Die Romane Heinrich Bölls: Gesellschaftskritik und Gemeinschaftsutopie* (Berlin: Rütten und Loening, 1971)
- BIENEK, Horst, ‘Max Frisch’, in *Werkstattgespräche mit Schriftstellern* (Munich: Hanser, 1962), pp. 21-32
- _____, ‘Alfred Andersch’, in *Werkstattgespräche mit Schriftstellern* (Munich: Hanser, 1962), pp. 113-124
- BINGEL, Horst, ‘Überall ist Rerik’, in *Deutsche Rundschau* 11 (1957)
- BLOY, Léon, *La Femme Pauvre* (Paris: Livres de Poche, 1964)
- _____, *Le Désespéré* (Paris: Mercure, 1964)
- BÖHRINGER, Georg, ‘Zeitschriften der jungen Generation’, in *Zur literarischen Situation*, ed. Gerhard Hay (Kronberg: Athenäum, 1977), pp. 86-117
- BOLLINGER, Luis, Obschlager, Walter & Schütt Julian, *Jetzt: Max Frisch*, ed. (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 2001)
- BOLLNOW, Otto Friedrich, *Existenzphilosophie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1949)
- BORCHERT, Wolfgang, ‘Das Brot’ in *Das Gesamtwerk* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1949), pp. 304-306
- BORN, Nicolas & Manthey, Jürgen (ed.), *Literaturmagazin 7: Nachkriegsliteratur* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1977)

- BOSS, Medard, 'Recent Considerations in Daseinanalysis', in *The Humanistic Psychologist* 16.1 (1988), pp. 58-74
- BRAESE, Stephan, 'Vorwort', in *Bestandsaufnahme: Studien zur Gruppe 47*, ed. Stephan Braese (Berlin: Schmidt, 1999)
- BREAZEALE, Daniel, 'How to make an Existentialist? In search of a shortcut from Fichte to Sartre', in *Fichte and the Phenomenological Tradition*, ed. Violetta L. Maria Waibel, J. Daniel Breazeale & Tom Rockmore (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), pp. 277-312
- _____, 'Philosophy and the Divided-Self: On the Existential and Scientific Task of the Jena Wissenschaftslehre', in *Realität und Gewissheit*, vol. 6, ed. Helmut Girndt & Wolfgang H. Schrader (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), pp. 117-148
- BROCKMANN, Stephen, 'Heroes of Zero Hour', in *Heroes and Heroism in German Culture: Essays in Honor of Jost Hermand*, ed. Stephen Brockmann & James D. Steakley (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), pp. 103-122
- BROMBERT, Victor H., *In Praise of Antiheroes: Figures and Themes in Modern European Literature 1830-1980* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999)
- BUBNER, Nedialka, *Max Frisch* (Hamburg: Kovac, 2005)
- BÜHLMANN, Alfons, *In der Faszination der Freiheit: Eine Untersuchung zur Struktur der Grundthematik im Werk von Alfred Andersch* (Berlin: Schmidt, 1973)
- BUTLER, Michael, *The Novels of Max Frisch* (London: Wolff, 1976)
- _____, 'The Conservative Moralist', in *The Narrative Fiction of Heinrich Böll*, ed. Michael Butler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 1-20
- BURGESS, Andrew, 'Repetition: A Story of Suffering', in *International Kierkegaard Commentary*, vol. 6, 'Fear and Trembling' and 'Repetition', ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1993), pp. 247-62
- CAMUS, Albert, *Essais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965)
- _____, 'No, I am not an Existentialist...', in *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, trans. E. Kennedy, ed. Philip Thody (New York: Knopf, 1968), pp. 345-348
- _____, *The Fall*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956)

- _____, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Random House, 2005)
- _____, *The Plague*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Knopf, 1948)
- _____, *The Stranger*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Vintage, 1954)
- CAPUTO, John D., *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987)
- CARR, Karen Leslie, *The Banalization of Nihilism: Twentieth-Century Responses to Meaninglessness* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992)
- CLEMENS, Justin, *The Romanticism of Contemporary Theory: Institutions, Aesthetics, Nihilism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003)
- COHEN-SOLAL, Annie, *Sartre 1905-1980* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1988)
- COME, Arnold B., *Kierkegaard as Humanist: Discovering My Self* (Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995)
- CONARD, Robert C., *Understanding Heinrich Böll* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1992)
- COOPER, David E., *Existentialism: A Reconstruction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990)
- _____, 'Existentialism as a Philosophical Movement', in *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 27-49
- COPLESTON, Frederick, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 7/ii: *Schopenhauer to Nietzsche* (New York: Image/Doubleday, 1963)
- CORTI, C. Agustín, *Zeitproblematik bei Martin Heidegger und Augustinus* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006)
- CROWE, Marian E., *Aiming at Heaven, Getting the Earth: The English Catholic Novel Today* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2007)
- CUNLIFFE, W. G., 'Die Kunst, ohne Geschichte abzuschwimmen: Existenzialistisches Strukturprinzip in *Stiller*, *Homo Faber* und *Mein Name sei Gantenbein*', in *Max Frisch: Aspekte des Prosawerks*, ed. Gerhard P. Knapp (Bern: Lang, 1978), pp. 103-122
- _____, 'Existentialist Elements in Frisch's Works,' in *Monatshefte* 62 (1970), pp. 113-122
- DE BEAUVOIR, Simone, *Force of Circumstance*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1964)

- _____, *She Came to Stay*, trans. Yvonne Moyse & Roger Senhouse (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006)
- _____, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Citadel, 1996)
- DE OLIVEIRA, Nythamar, ‘Introduction: From Continental Europe to Latin America’, in *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy*, ed. Susana Nuccetelli, Ofelia Schutte, and Otávio Bueno (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 255-276
- DOUGLAS, Kenneth, ‘The French Intellectuals: Situation and Outlook’, in *Modern France: Problems of the Third and Fourth Republics*, ed. E. M. Earle (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 61-81
- DREWITZ, Ingeborg, ‘Alfred Andersch oder Die Krise des Engagements: Der Erzähler’, *Merkur* June 20 1966, pp. 669-675
- DÜRRENMATT, Friedrich, *Turmbau; Stoff IV-XX* (Diogenes: Zurich, 1990)
- ENZENSBERGER, Hans Magnus, ‘Die Clique’, in *Almanach der Gruppe 47, 1947-1962*, ed. Hans Werner Richter (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1962), pp. 22-27
- FICHTE, Johann Gottlieb, ‘Bestimmung des Menschen’, in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 6 (Berlin: Nicolosius, 1845), pp. 167-319
- _____, *Werke*, ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte, vol. 5 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971)
- FINLAY, Frank, *On the Rationality of Poetry: Heinrich Böll's Aesthetic Thinking* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996)
- FOUCAULT, Michel, ‘The Ethic of Care for the Self as Practice of Freedom: An Interview with Michel Foucault’, in *The Final Foucault*, trans. J. D. Gauthier & S. J., ed. James William Bernauer & David M. Rasmussen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988) pp. 1-20
- _____, ‘On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress’, in *The Foucault Reader*, trans. J. Harari, ed. Paul Rabinow (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), pp. 340-372
- FOULQUIE, Paul, *L'Existentialisme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1947)
- FOLEY, John, *Albert Camus: From the Absurd to Revolt* (New York: Routledge, 2014)
- FRANK, Manfred, ‘Unendliche Annäherung’: *Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997)

- FREEDMAN, Maurice, 'Introduction', in *The Worlds of Existentialism: A Critical Reader*, ed. Maurice Freedman (New York: Random House, 1964)
- FRIES, Ulrich & Peters, Günter, 'Zum Verhältnis von Kunsttheorie und ästhetischer Praxis bei Alfred Andersch', in *Alfred Andersch: Text und Kritik* 61/62 (Munich: Richard-Boorberg, 1979), pp. 27-53
- FURCHERT, Almut, *Das Leiden fassen: Zur Leidensdialektik Søren Kierkegaards* (Freiburg/Munich: Karl Alber, 2012)
- GESING, Fritz, *Die Psychoanalyse der literarischen Form: Stiller von Max Frisch* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1988)
- GILMORE, James & Pine, Joseph, *Authenticity: What consumers really want* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2007)
- GÖRTZ, Franz Josef (ed.), *Heinrich Boll. Zu seinem Tode. Ausgewählte Nachrufe und das letzte Interview* (Bonn: Inter Nationes, 1985)
- GÖTZ, Karl-August, 'Léon Bloy', in *Christliche Dichter der Gegenwart: Beiträge zur Europäischen Literatur*, ed. Hermann Friedmann and Otto Mann (Heidelberg: Rothe, 1955), pp. 44-72
- GOODMAN, Paul, Ralph Hefferline & Frederick Perls (eds.), *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* (New York: Julian Press, 1951)
- GORDON, Haim, 'Authenticity', in *Dictionary of Existentialism*, ed. Haim Gordon (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1999), pp. 22-27
- GORDON, Peter E., 'German Existentialism and the Persistence of Metaphysics: Weber, Jaspers, Heidegger', in *Situating Existentialism: Key Texts in Context*, eds. Jonathan Judaken and Robert Bernasconi (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 65-88
- GREENE, Graham, *The Power and the Glory* (London: William Heinemann & The Bodley Head, 1971)
- GRENE, Marjorie, 'Authenticity: An Existential Virtue', in *Ethics* 62 (July 1952), pp. 266-274
- GRINTEN, Lars van der, *Verzweiflung und Leiden: Søren Kierkegaards göttliche Pädagogik* (Essen: Die Blaue Eule, 2000)
- GRÜTZBACH, Frank (ed.), *Heinrich Böll: Freies Geleit für Ulrike Meinhof: Ein Artikel und seine Folgen* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1972)

- GÜHNE-ENGELMANN, Kerstin, *Die Thematik des versäumten Lebens im Prosawerk Max Frischs*, Ph.D Thesis, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität zu Freiburg. 1994
- HAMMACHER, Klaus, ‘Jacobis Brief an Fichte’, in *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation*, vol. 2.1 of *Philosoph-literarische Streitsachen* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1993)
- HARTMANN, Nicolai, *Moral Freedom*, vol. 3 of *Ethics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2004)
- HEIDEGGER, Martin, *Überlegungen II-VI (Schwarze Hefte 1931-1938)* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2014)
- _____, *Was ist Metaphysik?*, tenth edition (Frankfurt a/M: Klostermann, 1969)
- _____, *Sein und Zeit*, twelfth edition (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1972)
- HEIDELBERGER-Leonhard, Irene, *Die ästhetische Position als politisches Gewissen: Zu den Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Kunst und Wirklichkeit in den Romanen* (Frankfurt/Berlin/New York: Lang, 1986)
- HEIST, Walter, ‘Das war im Jahr 1931 oder 1932’, *Der Skorpion* 1 (1948), p. 6
- HEGEL, G. W. F., ‘Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte’, in *G. W. F. Hegel: Werke (in zwanzig Bänden)*, eds. Eva Moldenhauer, Karl Markus Michel (Suhrkamp: Frankfurt a/M: 1969)
- HELM, Melanie, *Spes contra spem: Ansätze zu einem Kirchenbild der Zukunft bei Heinrich Böll* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005)
- HIRSCHBERGER, Johannes, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol 2: *Neuzeit und Gegenwart* (Freiburg: Herder, 1976)
- HOFMANN, Charles W., ‘The Search for Self, Inner Freedom and Relatedness in the Novels of Max Frisch’, in *The Contemporary Novel in German: A Symposium*, ed. Robert R. Heitner (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1967), pp. 91–113
- HERRIGAN, Paul Gerard, *Epistemology: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Knowledge* (New York: iUniverse, 2007)
- HORST, Eberhard, ‘Fluchtwege’, in *Neue Deutsche Hefte* 45 (1958), pp. 70-71
- HORVAT, Vesna Kondrič, ‘Räumliche Bewegung als Flucht vor sich selbst’, in *Jenseits von Frisch und Dürrenmatt: Raumgestaltung in der gegenwärtigen Deutschschweizer Literatur*, ed. Dariusz Komorowski (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2009), pp. 25-38

- HOVEN, Herbert (ed.), *Die Hoffnung ist ein wildes Tier: Der Briefwechsel zwischen Heinrich Böll und Ernst-Adolf Kunz 1945-1953* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1994)
- HUMMEL, Christine, *Intertextualität im Werk Heinrich Bölls* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2002)
- IGGERS, Wilma, 'Max Frisch: Mein Name sei Gantenbein' in *Books Abroad* 39.2 (Spring 1965)
- IMBACH, Josef, 'Entfremdung als Identitäts- und Transzendenzverlust. Kierkegaard als Schlüssel für eine theologische Interpretation von Max Frischs Roman "Stiller"', in *Geist und Leben*, 52 (Würzburg: Echter, 1979), pp. 133-46
- IRRGANG, Bernhard, *Homo Faber: Arbeit, technische Lebensform und menschlicher Leib* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2010)
- JASPERS, Karl, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (Munich: Piper, 1949)
- _____, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (Heidelberg: Julius Springer, 1945)
- _____, *Existenzphilosophie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1938)
- _____, *Einführung in die Philosophie* (Munich: Piper, 1971)
- _____, *Philosophie*, vol. 3: *Metaphysik* (Berlin: Julius Springer 1932)
- _____, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung* (Munich: Piper, 1962)
- JENDRICKE, Bernhard, *Alfred Andersch* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1988)
- JOBS, Richard Ivan, *Riding the New Wave: Youth and the Rejuvenation of France after the Second World War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007)
- _____, *Überlegungen VII-IX (Schwarze Hefte 1938-1939)* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2014)
- _____, *Überlegungen VII-XV (Schwarze Hefte 1939-1941)* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2014)
- _____, 'Brief über den Humanismus,' in *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit; mit einem Brief über den Humanismus* (Bern: Francke, 1947), pp. 72-75
- _____, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1987)
- JUDAKEN, Jonathan & Bernasconi, Robert (eds), *Situating Existentialism: Key Texts in Context* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012)

- JUDT, Tony, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London: Random House, 2007)
- JÜNGER, Ernst, 'Über den Schmerz', in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 7: *Essays I: Betrachtungen zur Zeit* (Stuttgart: Klett Cotta, 1980), pp. 143-191
- JUNG, Werner & Schubert, Jochen (eds.): *'Ich sammle Augenblicke' – Heinrich Böll 1917-1985* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2008)
- JURGENSEN, Manfred, *Max Frisch: Die Romane* (Bern: Francke, 1972)
- KANT, Emmanuel, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Berlin/Leipzig: de Gruyter, 1919)
- KAY, Gerhard, 'Die Kirschen Etruriens in der Faszination von Sartres Appell zur Entscheidung', in *Zu Alfred Andersch*, ed. Volker Wehdeking (Stuttgart: Klett, 1983), pp. 13-21
- KELLY, Mark G. E., *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault* (New York: Routledge, 2009)
- KESTING, Hanjo, 'Die Flucht vor dem Schicksal: Über den Schriftsteller Alfred Andersch', in *Alfred Andersch, Text und Kritik 61/62* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1979), pp. 3-22
- KIERKEGAARD, Søren, 'Journal Entry for 1854', in *The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. and trans. Alexander Dru (London: Oxford University Press, 1951)
- _____, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, trans. Reidar Thomte (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980)
- _____, *Kierkegaard's Writings, IV, Part II: Either/Or: Part II*, trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987)
- _____, *The Sickness unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1941)
- _____, *Repetition*, trans. Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983)
- _____, *Attack Upon 'Christendom': 1854-1855*, trans. and introduction by Walter Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1944)
- _____, *Practice in Christianity*, trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991)

- _____, 'This Must Be Said; So Let It Be Said', in *The Moment and Late Writings*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998)
- _____, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to 'Philosophical Fragments'*, vol. 1, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992)
- _____, *Journals and Papers*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978)
- _____, *The Gospel of Sufferings and The Lilies of the Field*, trans. David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing, 1948)
- KIESER, Gabriele, *Christus im Armen: Zur Bedeutung der Armut und des Armen bei Léon Bloy* (Würzburg: Echter, 1996)
- KLEIST, Heinrich von, *Die Hermannsschlacht: ein Drama in fünf Aufzügen* (Ditzingen: Reclam, 1963)
- KLINGEMANN, Ernst August Friedrich, *Die Nachtwachen des Bonaventura*, ed. J. Schillemeit (Frankfurt a/M: Insel, 1974)
- KOBERSTEIN, Anja, *Gott oder das Nichts: Sartre-Rezeption im frühen Nachkriegswerk von Alfred Andersch im Kontext der zeitgenössischen Existentialismuskussion* (Frankfurt a/M: Lang, 1996)
- KÖHN, Lothar, 'Vom Nullpunkt zum Posthistoire: Zu Konstruktionselementen einer Geschichte der deutschen Literatur 1945-1990', in *1945-1995: Fünfzig Jahre deutschsprachige Literatur in Aspekten*, eds. Gerhard P. Knapp & Gerd Labrousse (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), pp. 13-56
- KOLAKOWSKI, Lesek, 'Philosophical Faith in the Face of Revelation', in *Modernity on Endless Trial* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 108-119
- KRÖLL, Friedhelm, *Gruppe 47* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979)
- LANGSTON, Richard, *Visions of Violence: German Avant-Gardes After Fascism* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008)
- LENZ, Siegfried, 'Freiheit, vom Kirschbaum gepflückt: Zu Alfred Anderschs autobiographischem Bericht über eine Fahnenflucht', in *Die Kirschen der Freiheit von Alfred Andersch: Materialien zu einem Buch und seiner Geschichte*, ed. Winfried Stephan (Zurich: Diogenes, 2002), pp. 45-49

- LITTLER, Margaret, *Alfred Andersch 1914-1980: And the Reception of French Thought in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1991)
- LISI, Leonardo F. ‘Kierkegaard and Modern European Literature’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard*, eds. John Lippitt & George Pattison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 550-569
- LLOSA, Mario Vargas, ‘Ist es möglich, Schweizer zu sein? Zu “Stiller”’, in *Jetzt: Max Frisch*, eds. Luis Bollinger, Walter Obschlager, Julian Schütt (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 2001), pp. 104-109
- LUBICH, Frederick Alfred, *Max Frisch: Stiller, Homo Faber und Mein Name sei Gantenbein* (Munich: Fink, 1990)
- LUSSEMERTELSMANN, Gunda, *Max Frisch* (Zurich: Pro Helvetia, 1976)
- MAGURSHAK, Dan, ‘Despair and Everydayness: Kierkegaard’s Corrective Contribution to Heidegger’s Notion of Fallen Everydayness’, in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: The Sickness unto Death*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), pp. 207-237
- MALINOWSKI, Bernadette, ‘German Romantic Poetry in Theory and Practise: The Schlegel Brothers, Schelling, Tieck, Novalis, Eichendorff, Brentano, and Heine’, in *The Literature of German Romanticism*, ed. Dennis F. Mahoney (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004), pp. 147-169
- MALPAS, Jeff, ‘Existentialism as Literature’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism*, ed. Steven Crowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 291-321
- MANGER, Philip, ‘Kierkegaard in Max Frisch’s Novel “Stiller,”’ *German Life and Letters* 20 (1966), pp. 119-31
- MANNZEN, Walter, ‘Die Selbstentfremdung des Menschen’, *Der Ruf* 2 (1946)
- _____, ‘Albert Camus und das Absurde’, *Der Ruf* 8 (1946)
- MARCUSE, Herbert, ‘Existentialism: Remarks on Jean-Paul Sartre’s *L’Être et le néant*’, in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* v8.3 (March 1948), pp. 309-336
- MARITAIN, Jacques, *Existence and the Existent*, trans. Lewis Galantieri & Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Pantheon, 1949)
- _____, ‘A Philosophy of Freedom’, in *Freedom in the Modern World*, trans. Richard O’Sullivan (New York: Gordian, 1971 [1936]), pp. 4-41

- _____, *Liberté sous Conditions* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1946)
- _____, *Personalism*, trans. Philip Mairet (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1952)
- MÜLLER-SALGET, Klaus, *Literaturwissen: Max Frisch* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2007)
- NÄGELE, Rainer, *Heinrich Böll: Einführung in das Werk und in die Forschung* (Frankfurt a/M: Athenäum, 1976)
- NATALE, Erica, *Rollendasein und verhindertes Erleben: Literatur und literarische Bezüge im Kontext des Stiller von Max Frisch* (Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2000)
- NICKENIG, Christoph, *Desastres de la guerra: Studien zum Bild des II. Weltkrieges im Roman* (Frankfurt a/M: Lang, 1996)
- NIETZSCHE, Friedrich, ‘Die fröhliche Wissenschaft’, in *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988)
- _____, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe VIII/2*, ed. Giorgio Colli & Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967)
- _____, ‘Vorrede’, in vol. 13, *Nachlaß 1887-1889 Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli & Mazzino Montinari (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999)
- _____, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches: Ein Buch für freie Geister* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1964)
- _____, *Der Antichrist: Fluch auf das Christentum* (Berlin: Hofenberg, 2013)
- NISHITANI, Keiji, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, trans. Graham Parkes & Setsuko Aihara (Albany, NY: New York Press, 1990)
- NOVALIS, ‘Fragmente und Studien 1799/1800’, in *Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, vol. 2, eds. Hans-Joachim Mähl & Richard Samuel (Munich: Hanser, 1978)
- OFFIZIER, Michael, *Vom heldenhaften Führer zum einsamen Deserteur: Zum Wandel der Motive von Männlichkeit in der deutschen Kriegsliteratur* (Hamburg: Diplomica, 2012)
- Ó MURCHADHA, Felix, ‘Religion and Ethics’, in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Phenomenology: Responses and Developments*, eds. Alan D. Schrift & Leonard Lawlor (Durham: Acumen, 2010), pp. 195-216

- O’NEILL, John, ‘Situation and Temporality’, in *The Debate Between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), pp. 315-326
- OVIEDO, José Miguel, ‘The Modern Essay in Spanish America’, in *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature*, vol. 2, eds. Roberto Gonzalez Echevarría, Enrique Pupo-Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 365-424
- PFEIFER, Jochen, *Der Deutsche Kriegsroman 1945 bis 1960: Ein Versuch zur Vermittlung von Literatur und Sozialgeschichte* (Königstein/Taunus: Scriptor, 1981)
- PHILIPSE, Herman, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998)
- PLATO, *Apology; In Five Dialogues*, second edition, trans. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2002)
- PLESSEN, Elisabeth, ‘In Freiheit flüchtig: Über die Frauengestalten in Alfred Anderschs Romanen’, in *Interpretationen zu Alfred Andersch*, ed. Volker Wehdeking (Stuttgart: Klett, 1983), pp. 118-131
- POPKIN, Richard, ‘Spinoza, Neoplatonic Kabbalist?’, in *Neo-Platonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. Lenn E. Goodman (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 387-409
- PSCHERA, Alexander, *Léon Bloy: Pilger des Absoluten* (Schnellroda: Edition Antaios, 2006)
- RAABE, Anne, *Das Wort stammt von Kierkegaard: Alfred Andersch und Sören Kierkegaard* (Frankfurt a/M: Lang, 1999)
- RATERS, Marie-Luise, ‘Atheismus’, in *Religionen und Weltanschauungen: Werte, Normen, Fragen in Judentum, Christentum, Islam, Hinduismus/Buddhismus, Esoterik und Atheismus*, vol. 6, ed. Karl Grözinger (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschaftsverlag, 2009)
- RATH, Wolfgang, ‘Alfred Andersch’, in *Literaturlexicon*, vol. 1, ed. Walther Killy (Munich: Bertelsmann Lexikon, 1988)
- RAUCH, R. William, *Politics and Belief in Contemporary France: Emmanuel Mounier and Christian Democracy: 1932-1950* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1972)
- REICH-RANICKI, Marcel, ‘Ein ungedeckter Scheck’, in *Max Frisch: Aufsätze* (Zurich: Ammann, 1991), pp. 91-97
- _____, *Deutsche Literatur in West und Ost: Prosa seit 1945* (Munich: Piper, 1963)

- REINHARDT, Stephan, *Alfred Andersch: Eine Biographie* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1990)
- _____, ‘Ästhetik als Widerstand: Andersch als Bürger und engagierter Schriftsteller’, in *Alfred Andersch*, eds. Irene Heidelberger-Leonard & Volker Wehdeking (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994), pp. 32-41
- REINHOLD, Ursula, ‘Alfred Andersch: Winterspelt’, in *Weimarer Beiträge* 2 (1977), pp. 136-143
- RICHTER, Hans Werner, ‘Fünfzehn Jahre’, in *Almanach der Gruppe 47: 1947-1962*, ed. Hans Werner Richter (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1964), pp. 8-14
- RICHTER, Johann Paul Friedrich, *Sämtliche Werke: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Eduard Berend et al. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1927)
- _____, ‘Rede des toten Christus vom Weltgebäude herab, daß kein Gott sei’, in *Erstes Blumenstück des Siebenkäs: Werke*, vol. 2, ed. Gustav Lohmann (Munich: Hanser, 1959), pp. 266-271
- RUDOLPH, Ekkehart, ‘Gespräch mit Heinrich Böll’, in *Protokoll zur Person: Autoren über sich und ihr Werk*, ed. E. Rudolph (Munich: List, 1971), pp. 27-43
- RUPPERT, Peter, *Existential Themes in the Plays of Max Frisch*, Ph.D Thesis, University of Iowa, 1973
- SAINT-BONNET, Blanc de, *De La Doleur* (Grenoble: Million, 2008)
- SANDER, Gabriele, ‘Die Last des Ungelesen: Böll und die literarische Moderne’, in *Das Werk Heinrich Bölls: Bibliographie mit Studien zum Frühwerk*, ed. Werner Bellmann (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995), pp. 61-88
- SANYAL, Debarati, ‘Broken Engagements: Sartre, Camus, and the Question of Commitment’, in *Yale French Studies* 98 (2000), pp. 29-49
- SARGEANT, Maggie, *Kitsch & Kunst: Presentations of a Lost War* (Bern: Lang, 2005)
- SARTRE, Jean-Paul, *Existentialism and Humanism* (London: Methuen, 1970)
- _____, ‘Materialism and Revolution’, in *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, trans. Annette Michelson (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 198-256
- _____, ‘The Flies’, in *Altona; Men without Shadows; The Flies*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965)
- _____, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (London: Routledge, 1958)

- _____, *Les jeux sont faits* (London: Methuen, 1956)
- _____, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, trans. Forrest Williams & Robert Kirkpatrick (New York: Noonday Press, 1957)
- _____, 'The Flies', in *No Exit and Three Other Plays* (New York: Vintage, 1955), pp. 49-127
- _____, 'Die Fliegen', in *Gesammelte Dramen* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1984), pp. 7-65
- _____, 'La Liberté Cartésienne', in *Situations I* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), pp. 314-35
- _____, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, trans. Bernhard Frechtmann & Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957)
- _____, 'Francois Mauriac and Freedom', in *Situations I*, trans. Annette Michelson (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), pp. 44
- _____, *The Republic of Silence*, ed. A. J. Liebling, trans. Ramon Guthrie (New York: Harcourt, 1947)
- _____, 'Paris under the Occupation', trans. Lisa Lieberman, *Raritan*, 24.3 (Winter 2005), pp. 136-153
- SAUDER, Gerhard, 'Heinrich Bölls Léon-Bloy-Lektüre: Ursprünge eines radikalen Katholizismus', in *'Ich sammle Augenblicke' – Heinrich Böll 1917-1985*, eds. Werner Jung and Jochen Schubert (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2008), pp. 31-48
- SCHALK, David L., *The Spectrum of Political Engagement: Mounier, Benda, Nizan, Brasillach, Sartre* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979)
- SCHALLÜCK, Paul, 'Interview mit Heinrich Böll', in *Literair Paspoort* 69 (1953), Amsterdam, p. 187
- SCHMITZ, Walter, 'Philosophie als "Plagiatprofil": Wissen und Erkenntnisgrenzen der Literatur im Werk Max Frischs', in *Germanica* 48 (2011), pp. 55-74
- SCHNEPP, Beate, 'Die Aufgabe des Schriftstellers: Bölls künstlerisches Selbstverständnis im Spiegel unbekannter Zeugnisse', in *Das Werk Heinrich Bölls: Bibliographie mit Studien zum Frühwerk*, ed. Werner Bellmann (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995), pp. 45-60
- SCHRÖTER, Klaus, *Böll mit Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1992)
- SCHUBERT, Jochen (ed.), *Heinrich Böll: Briefe aus dem Krieg: 1939-1945*, vol. 1 (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2001)

- _____, *Heinrich Böll* (Paderborn: Fink, 2011)
- SCHULZ, Max Walter, ‘Mehr als “Polyphon umgrenztes Weiß”: Alfred Andersch, Winterspelt’, in *Interpretationen zu Alfred Andersch*, ed. Volker Wehdeking (Stuttgart: Klett, 1983), pp. 57-65
 - SCRUTON, Roger, ‘Kant’, in *German Philosophers: Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche*, eds. Roger Scruton, Peter Singer, Christopher Janaway, Michael Tanner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 7-104
 - SEDEKERSKYTE, Regina, *Schuld- und Zeitbewusstsein im Spätwerk von Max Frisch aus existentieller Sicht* (Bergen: Germanistisches Institut der Universität Bergen, 1999)
 - SELLARS, John, *Stoicism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006)
 - SENNE, René le, *Introduction à la philosophie*, second edition (Paris: Alcan, 1939)
 - SETH, Armus D., ‘The Eternal Enemy: Emmanuel Mounier’s *Esprit* and French Anti-Americanism’, in *French Historical Studies*, 24.2 (Spring 2001), pp. 271-303
 - SOWINSKI, Bernhard, *Heinrich Böll* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993)
 - STEMMLER, Wolfgang (1972), *Max Frisch, Heinrich Böll und Sören Kierkegaard*, Ph.D Thesis, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich
 - STEWART, Jon, *Idealism and Existentialism: Hegel and Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century European Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2010)
 - THIELICKE, Helmut, *Der Nihilismus: Entstehung, Wesen, Überwindung* (Tübingen: Rechl, 1951)
 - TILICH, Paul, ‘Das Neue Sein als Erfüllung’, in *Religiöse Reden* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1983), pp. 307-320
 - TOMER, Adrian & T. Eliason, Grafton, ‘Existentialism and Death Attitudes’, in *Existential and Spiritual Issues in Death Attitudes*, eds. Adrian Tomer, Grafton T. Eliason, & Paul T. P. Wong (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2007), pp. 7-38
 - TUGENDHAT, Ernst, *Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Husserl und Heidegger* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970)
 - VAISFELD, Alina, ‘Alfred Andersch: Reading Søren Kierkegaard as a Flight to Freedom’, in *Kierkegaard’s Influence on Literature, Criticism and Art*, ed. Jon Bartley Stewart (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 1-14
 - VAN STRALEN, Hans, ‘An Unwelcome Book: About Heinrich Böll’s *Der Engel schwieg*’, in H. van Stralen, *Choices and Conflict: Essays on Literature and Existentialism* (Brussels: Lang, 2005), pp. 111-118

- VOGT, Vochen, *Heinrich Böll* (Munich: C.H Beck, 1978)
- VORMWEG, Heinrich, ‘Die Kritiker der Gruppe 47: Innen und Aussen’, in *Die Gruppe 47 in der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik*, eds. Justus Fetscher, Eberhard Lämmert, Jürgen Schütte (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1991), pp. 239-50
- WEBER, Carl August, ‘Die literarischen Strömungen in Frankreich und die junge Generation’, *Der Ruf* 5 (15 October 1946)
- WEHDEKING, Volker, *Alfred Andersch* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1983)
- WEIL, Simone, *Waiting on God (Attente de Dieu)*, trans. Emma Craufurd (London: Routledge, 1951)
- WENNERSCHIED, Sophie, ‘Max Frisch: Literary Transformations of Identity’, in *Kierkegaard’s Influence on Literature, Criticism and Art: Tome I: The Germanophone World*, ed. Jon Stewart (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 79-90
- WERKMEISTER, William H., *Martin Heidegger on the Way*, ed. Richard T. Hull (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996)
- WESTRA, Laura, ‘Freedom, Existence and Existentialism’, in *Jacques Maritain: The Man and his Metaphysics*, ed. John F. X. Knasas (Notre Dame, IN: American Maritain Association, 1988), pp. 243-53
- WEYRAUCH, Wolfgang (ed.), ‘Nachwort’, in *Tausend Gramm: Sammlung neuer deutscher Geschichten* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1949)
- WILDENBURG, Dorothea, *Jean-Paul Sartre* (Frankfurt a/M: Campus, 2004)
- WILLIAMS, Rhys, ‘Alfred Andersch’, in *Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*, vol. 1, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1978), pp. 3-12
- _____, ‘Inventing West German Literature: Alfred Andersch and the Gruppe 47’, in *The Gruppe 47: Fifty Years on a Re-Appraisal of its Literary and Political Significance*, eds. Stuart Parkes & John J. White (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 69-88
- WINTSCH-SPIESS, Monika, *Zum Problem der Identität im Werk Max Frischs* (Zurich: Juris, 1965)
- WITTMANN, Livia Z., *Alfred Andersch* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971)
- WOELFEL, James W., *The Existentialist Legacy and Other Essays on Philosophy and Religion* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006)

- ### III. Interviews

- 292

